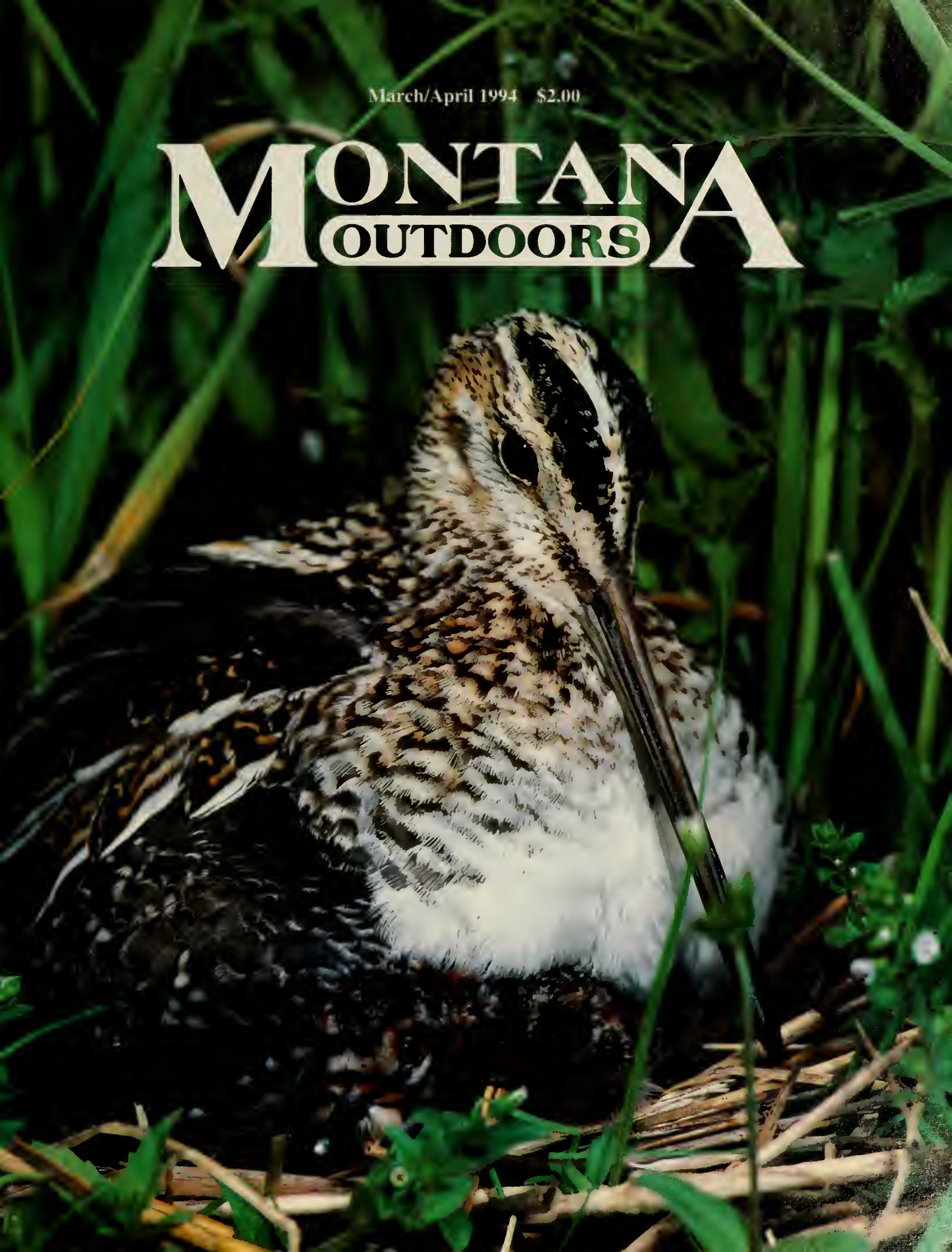
March/April 1994 $2.00

MONTANA OUTDOORS



Our Point of View

JOHN FRALEY

"When I grow up, I want to be a game warden."

How many kids have had that thought? Working outdoors in a place like Montana, helping preserve our wildlife legacy—life would be good.

Many people's first image of Fish, Wildlife & Parks is the warden. After all, the first and only employee of the department was the state game warden hired in 1895. The first biologist would not be hired for nearly a half-century.

Today's game warden is still a lot of things to a lot of people. On a typical winter day—after most have stopped thinking about hunting and before they start thinking about fishing—a game warden still has much to think about.

A report comes in on a deer hit by a car. A mountain lion hunter waits to get his lion inspected and tagged. A rancher asks the warden to come out and do something about the white-tailed deer in his haystacks. The warden takes measurements for a "stack yard" and makes plans to bring out the fencing material next week. "And by the way," the rancher offers, "there were some poachers out here spotlighting along the road last week. Any chance you could set up that deer decoy?"

Then it's off to the county attorney to review game violation cases from the past season as they get ready for court. Of course, there are tentative hunting and fishing regulations that need review on his desk at home and preparation for tomorrow night's hunter safety class.

So, tell me again why you want to be a game warden?

On his way back home the warden drives past horses in a pasture and his thoughts drift off to his horseback trip into the backcountry last summer. It had rained a lot, but the rain wasn't so bad. And there is always next year....

Patrick J. Graham, Director
Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks

CONRAD ROWE

Perched on his drumming log, a male ruffed grouse hurls a territorial challenge at neighboring males (see page 21).

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COVERS

According to Bruce Auchly's profile of the common snipe (page 9), the youngsters can cause mom all sorts of problems. But things seem under control in **Tom J. Ulrich's** stunning cover shot of a mother snipe with young. **Conrad Rowe's** portrait of a strutting sage grouse makes an appropriate end piece for this issue of *MO*—see page 21 for more of Rowe's outstanding photography.

IT'S LAW ENFORCEMENT at a different pace, taking place across millions of acres of Montana's roadless areas. Backcountry law officers have jobs many people envy, but they often travel long distances alone with no backup, and they ride regardless of the weather.

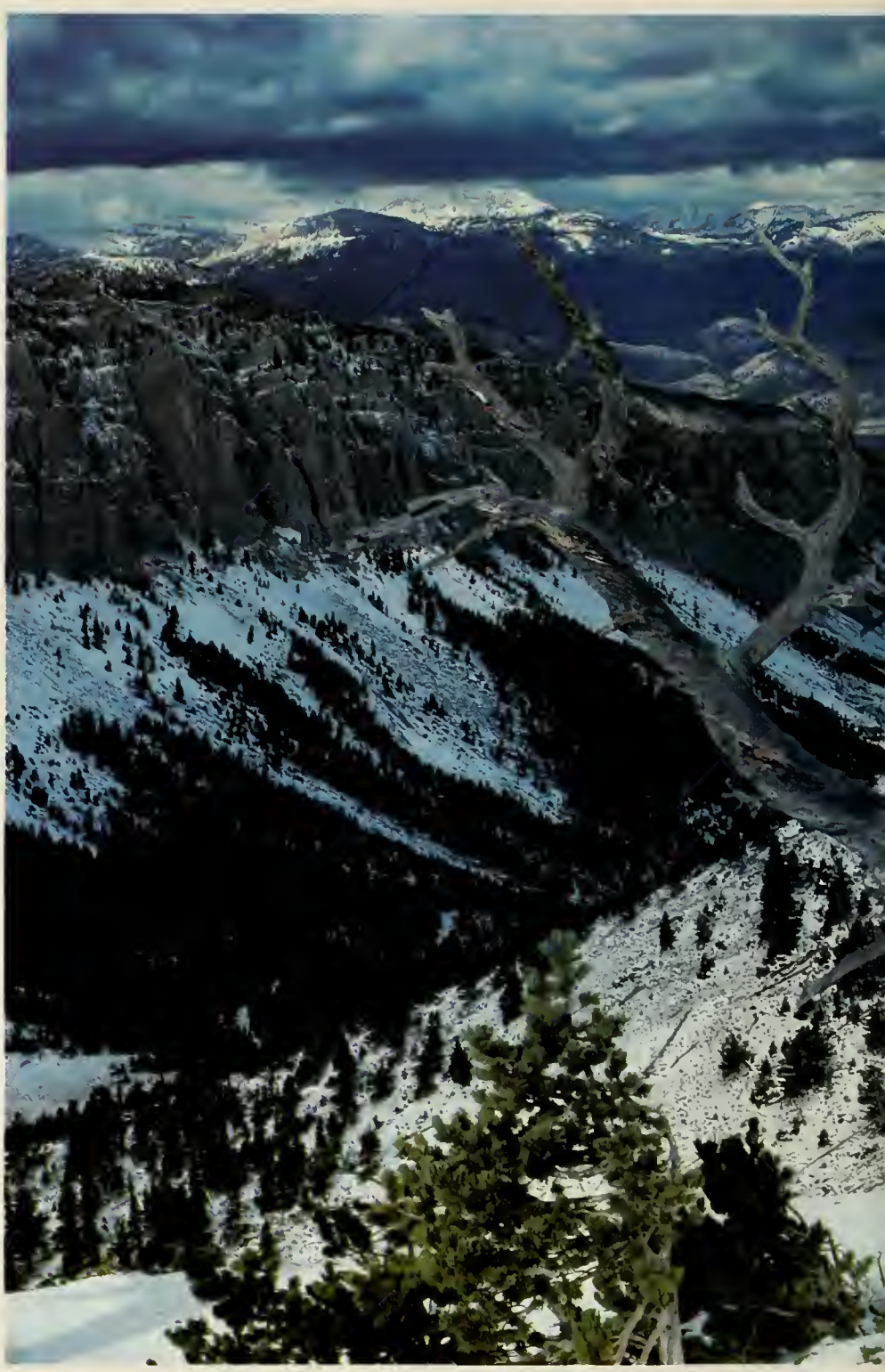
"It's a unique way of patrolling," said Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FW&P) Warden Sergeant Mack Long of Kalispell. "You might ride all day to get to a camp and find the hunters out. Then you usually spend a few hours with them when they get back before you head to your camp. That often means a lot of riding at night."

More than 20 FW&P wardens have backcountry enforcement duties across the state. In addition, several U.S. Forest Service rangers and law enforcement officers patrol backcountry areas on each national forest in Montana.

"We work closely with Forest Service officers in the backcountry," said Long. They allow us the use of their backcountry cabins and, in return, we help them with their educational efforts on low-impact camping, weed-free hay, and so on." Long added that joint patrols and information exchange are also key parts of the relationship.

LARRY DAVIS, FW&P WARDEN in Augusta, is considered by most to be the dean of backcountry law enforcement. For 19 years he worked the Scapegoat Wilderness, now a portion of the Bob Marshall Wilderness complex, from his home base in Lincoln.

"I wouldn't want to work in a district without a backcountry area," he said. "I love getting on my horse and going back in the hills, and I don't care what the weather is like. Another plus



BEYOND

BILL MCRAE

Warden Larry Davis (above) of Augusta is one of 20 FW&P wardens with backcountry enforcement duties across the state.

ROAD'S END

by JOHN FRALEY

is the people you meet. Almost all of them are law-abiding and they are in there because they love the outdoors, too."

The most common violations he's seen include hunting outside proper boundaries and shooting game for others, or transfer of tag. "Sometimes the younger hunters will work a mountain day after day while the older folks stay in camp. The young guys do the shooting and the older guys do the tagging."

JOHN REALEY

Warden Sergeant Mack Long (foreground) on patrol in the Kalispell area.

For Davis, the most memorable example of a tag transfer involved a husband and wife goat hunt. "In the mid-seventies this couple moved to Lincoln from Michigan and they were barely there six months when the wife drew a goat permit," he said. "That kind of upset the locals right off, because some of them had been putting in for years and never drew a permit.

"Then, to top it off, the guy kept bragging how he was going to go get that goat, how he was going to shoot it for his wife. He even had a place in their new home all ready to hang the mount."

Davis said that local residents kept him informed of the couple's hunting plans, and when he returned from a backcountry patrol in mid-September, he found the couple had left to go on their hunt that day.

"I just repacked my gear on the spot and headed back down the trail early the next morning," he said. "Local residents wanted to see the man caught as bad as I did. Folks had told me the general area they were going to hunt, and I made a few guesses that turned out to be right."

After a day-long ride to the East Fork of the Blackfoot, Davis reached the outfitter camp where the couple was staying. The people at the camp weren't telling where the couple and their guides had gone, and would only say they had left on horses to parts unknown. Davis rode past the camp, found a little clearing along the creek, and bedded down for the night.

"I knew two spots where there were mountain goats in the area," said Davis. "So I picked one and at first light I headed in that direction."

He rode up a ridge toward the mountaintop and began glassing. Almost immediately he heard shooting.

"This guy had ridden up a steep hillside towards the ridge above me, crossed the ridge, rode down an avalanche chute way too steep for horses, hopped off his horse and began shooting in the air. I could see him clearly because he was wearing a yellow slicker. Finally, I figured out that he was shooting to herd a bunch of goats around a basin below me."

Next, Davis heard another volley of shots. "I spotted a guy in the basin lying on the rimrocks, no hunter orange, blazing away at the goats, which were running right towards him. The goats crossed quite a distance beneath him and every time he shot I could see a little puff of dust rise up from the rocks. By this time I'd set up my spotting scope, so I had an excellent view of what was going on.

"Finally the guy ran out of ammunition, but I saw a woman come out of the timber and hand him another gun. He continued shooting at the goats and finally killed one."

The man scrambled down a steep slide to reach the goat and began skinning it. Davis gathered his horses and made his way to where the others had tied their stock. He then walked out on the rimrock and began picking up spent cartridges. "When I saw that the shells were .338 magnum, I knew I had my man," he said. "I had talked to the guy and shot with him at the range in Lincoln, and I knew that's what he shot. I sat there for a while and watched him skin the goat out whole."

Then, Davis walked up behind the woman who had handed the gun to the man. She had been joined by another woman.

"The outfitter's wife looked at me and turned the color of a snowball," said Davis. "I just sat down on a rock and started passing the time of day. I didn't tell them what I'd seen, but I could tell they were wondering. Presently, we heard the lady's husband puffing up the hill. The guy got to within 30 feet of us before he saw me. I'd known the fellow as someone who talked a lot, but this time he was speechless.

"The guy told his wife to get out her tag and put it on the hide, but I told her she would be violating the law if she did that. The outfitter, who had been the shooter herding the goats, then joined us. After I explained the situation, I didn't get any argument from him. So we packed everything up and headed down the mountain.

"It was dark by now, and the outfitter's wife's horse, being night-blind, kept running into trees, so it took us quite a while to make our way down the trail. Finally, we got back to their

DAVE BENNETT

Despite unpredictable weather and occasional hardships, the wardens and rangers who patrol beyond the road's end are unanimous in their love for their work.

camp. Since it was already dark, I had supper with them that night and slept in their camp. The next morning after breakfast, I headed out with the goat hide."

Davis said that the incident made him a minor folk hero in Lincoln. "It did a lot for my reputation. The locals were mad because the man's wife, an out-of-stater, had gotten the permit, and doubly mad that he had bragged about how he'd shoot it for her. I don't know, if he'd been a local I may never have heard about it.

"People were impressed that I was able to catch them in the act. I have to admit it was pretty lucky to just ride in there and be able to see the whole thing through a spotting scope. I think he was just meant to be caught."

RANDY WUERTZ, FW&P WARDEN in Gardiner, is responsible for the west half of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness. He speaks for many wardens when he emphasizes the importance of backcountry enforcement. "Our backcountry areas are tremendous resources that need more protection," he said. "I consider it a special privilege to spend some of my time back there. The importance of these areas will only increase in the future."

Wuertz said that almost all backcountry users obey wildlife laws, but occasionally he encounters people who don't.

"I think the most unusual case I've worked on involved some guys from Arkansas. I rode into their camp with a Forest Service employee and we both felt something was wrong. First of all, they had brand-new, white-canvas tents held up by burned black tent poles, so right away I knew they lacked experience, and I thought it seemed like a suspicious outfit.

"And they had a huge, and I mean huge, fire and fire ring. I remember remarking to my partner that it was big enough to roast a pig. This was opening day of the backcountry hunting season, September fifteenth, and one of the guys had brought an elk into camp. They all acted suspicious—one guy wouldn't even look at me—but I checked everything out and couldn't find anything wrong."

Later that fall an informant stopped at the FW&P office in Bozeman and asked what kind of reward he could get if he knew about someone taking a grizzly illegally. When he found out, the informant began to tell his story.

"According to the informant these guys from Arkansas had shot a grizzly the day before we checked them," said Wuertz. The rogue guiding them saw a bear walk across the meadow near their camp that night and told the guys to shoot it, which they did. When they reached the bear the guide told them he'd made a mistake—it was a grizzly, and shooting one carried a $10,000 fine and jail time. Then he gathered up his horses and left camp.

"Well, of course, this spooked the guys from Arkansas. First they dragged the grizzly into the woods and piled brush over it, but they decided that wasn't good enough, and that they had to find a better hiding place. So they decided to bury it. But if they dug a hole they needed a reason for the fresh dirt, so they buried the bear in the middle of camp and built a huge, rock-lined fire pit over it."

After hearing the informant's story, Wuertz headed back into the area by helicopter, accompanied by Warden Captain Bud Hubbard and Warden Sergeant Jim Kropp. They found the

fire pit and dug up the grizzly carcass, which was partly decomposed by then. The men from Arkansas received thousands of dollars in fines and probation time. During the investiga-

Warden Randy Wuertz, Gardiner, is responsible for the west half of the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness.

tion, they also admitted to having shot the elk before the season opened, and for that received an additional $1,200 fine and loss of hunting privileges.

Despite occasional problems with rogues like the one above, Wuertz, like other wardens, has high praise for backcountry outfitters. "You deal with a lot of the same people and develop a close rapport with them," he said. "Outfitters know that the resource is their livelihood, and they have great respect for it. They are a huge asset in letting you know what's going on back there."

RED LODGE WARDEN RICH FURBER has made about 100 trips into the Absaroka-Beartooth Wilderness over the past eight years. "It's my main push all summer long," he said. "And we don't always use horses. A lot of lakes in the Beartooths you have to crawl to get to."

Furber said that wardens serve mainly as a deterrent in the backcountry, and the number of violations per visitor contact is very low. He spends most of his time checking anglers at mountain lakes.

"I seldom wear a uniform when I go in," he said. "Usually I'll get to a lake and fish an hour or so while I watch the other people fishing. That way if anyone is violating the law they won't have time to set their fishing pole down or toss it into the woods."

Once, Furber met some anglers who he said restored his faith in mankind. "We were riding up the Lake Fork Trail and we ran across a guy and his daughter. We had a nice chat, then introduced ourselves and the guy produced a fishing license. We asked the daughter if we could see her license, and the guy piped up and said she wasn't fishing. That seemed believable to us since they only had one pole. So we jabbed our horses in the ribs and took off up the trail, because we were running behind.

"We'd ridden for 40 minutes and probably covered nearly three miles when we heard this sound behind us. Here comes the guy we'd just talked to, puffing hard, running to catch up to us. He was breathing so hard he couldn't talk, so we waited for what seemed like five minutes. Then he said, 'Guys, I was raised a Christian and I just can't lie to you. She didn't catch anything, but she did fish.'"

Furber looked at his partner. "We just couldn't believe it. I used warden discretion and told him to go to Red Lodge and buy his daughter a nonresident season license. It didn't surprise me when I checked the next day and found he'd bought the license as promised. I didn't let the guy off. If he hadn't bought the license I would have followed up on it. So ever after that we've called it the Christian Trail."

People who violate usually pass through three stages according to Furber, including denial, negotiation, and acceptance. "Occasionally a person on the trail with a fishing pole will try to maintain that he or she wasn't fishing. But nobody packs a rod 20 miles if he isn't going to use it. If they have a pole, they better be able to produce a license. Usually when you explain the situation to them and treat them with respect, they accept the reasons why it's important to follow wildlife laws."

Furber points out that some of the biggest challenges and rewards come from working with horses in the backcountry. "You have to know what you're doing, and even then you'll have your moments," he said. "If you take a person and horses and put them in the backcountry more than four times, that person is going to have a horse run off. Anyone who says this isn't so doesn't know what he's talking about."

Furber's most memorable horse incident involved Peaches, a horse he obtained from another backcountry warden, Floyd Thomas. "Peaches was always the hardest horse to catch," said Furber. "He was always the one who started trouble with the other horses.

"Once, we took a group of biologists into Jordan Lake. The next morning we let the horses out to eat some horse cake. I was in the tent and when I looked out the horses looked fine, so I ducked back in to have a second cup of cocoa. The next time I looked out, no horses.

"That first day we covered 30 miles on foot looking for them. It kept running through my mind how I'd explain to the captain how Peaches died.

"Four more guys came in to help us find the horses. We looked and looked for four days before we finally found them. No one really gave me a bad time until we found the horses. Then it came."

But Furber got his revenge. "We determined that, as usual, Peaches had led the escape. But the joke was finally on him. A few years later we traded him for a mule. I don't know what happened to Peaches, but I can hope."

WARDEN MIKE QUINN of Bigfork adds that horses can pose a danger, particularly for outfitted hunters, who usually are not experienced riders.

"I ran into one guy this year in the Bob Marshall Wilderness who'd had a terrible spill. He was a big guy, at least 300 pounds, and he was unsteady in the saddle. He had fallen off his horse a few days earlier and landed squarely on his face. He had two black eyes, cuts on his nose and forehead, and he was

missing two teeth. But he'd come all the way out here from the Southeast, and he wasn't going to let his injuries keep him from having a good time. He was a memorable character in his bib overalls and Peter Pan hat with a feather garnish."

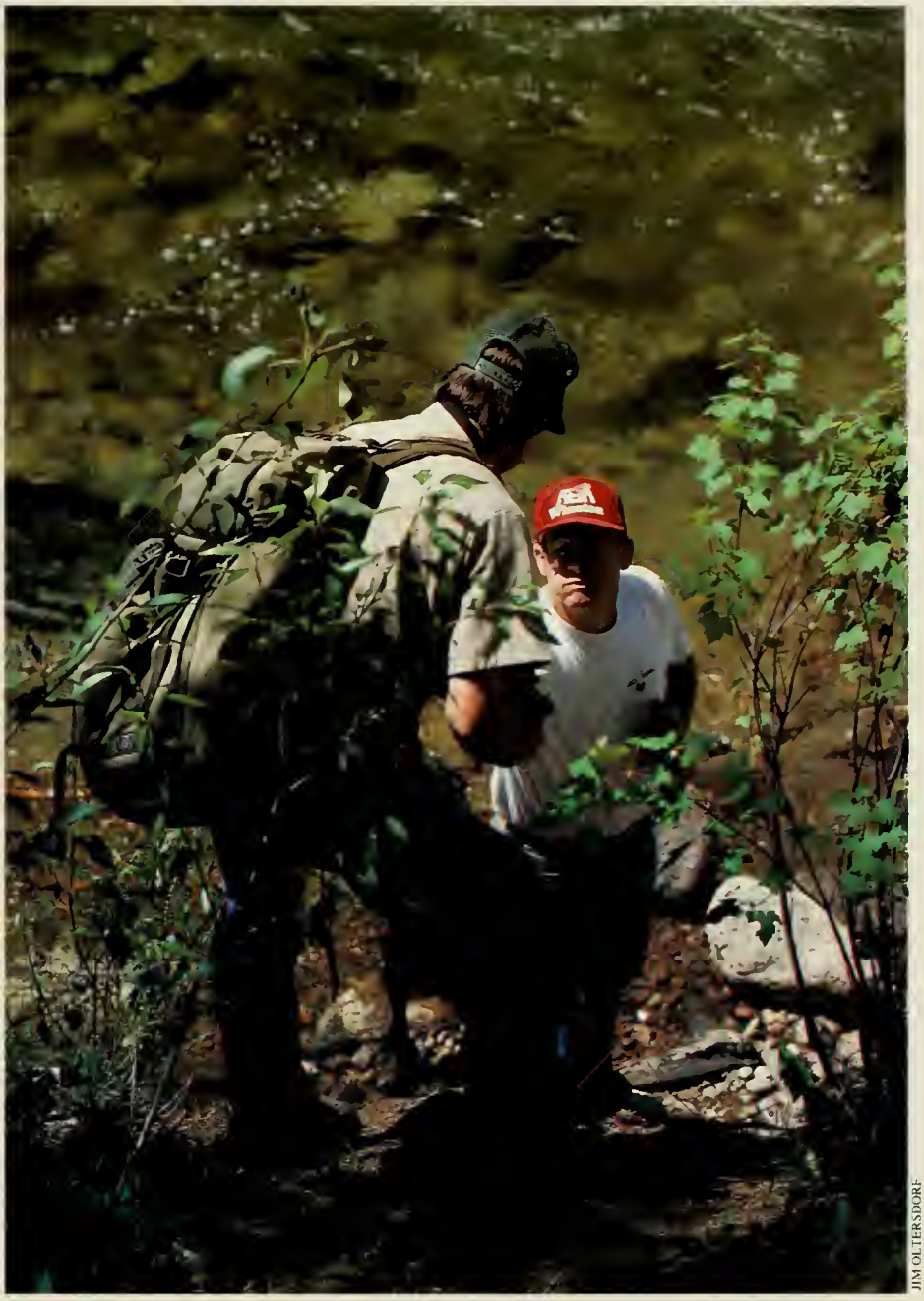
Another hunter Quinn saw in the Bob Marshall this year had a more serious accident. "I ran into this guy just 10 days after his accident. He'd fallen hard from the saddle and landed on his face. They had to ride him out and get a life-flight to Missoula, where he underwent extensive plastic surgery. The doctor must have done a good job, because you could hardly tell. Not only did this guy ride back in, he had just shot the biggest bull in camp. He'd been looking forward to the hunt for years and nothing was going to keep him from enjoying it."

GORDON ASH, THE LEAD WILDERNESS RANGER for the Spotted Bear District of the Flathead National Forest, has worked extensively in the Bob Marshall Wilderness complex for 14 years. Ash emphasizes the positive cooperation between Forest Service rangers and FW&P wardens.

"During the six-month field season I work with FW&P wardens regularly, up to ten percent of my time," he said. "This is essential because of the size of the area and the shared responsibilities of the agencies for the wilderness resources. It's been exciting to see this relationship grow stronger and stronger."

The way Ash sees it, education is the key to effective enforcement. "I view law enforcement as just a stricter sense of education, and it works with most people. Sometimes, though, you need to set examples, especially when people do something flagrant like litter, hack trees, or violate game laws. You need to show people there can be severe consequences if they do things the wrong way."

The backcountry incident that stands out most in Ash's mind is the case of the infamous "Bob Burglar." Every backcountry law enforcement officer has a story about a "mountain man," but Ash's has to be one of the best.



JIM OLTERSDORF

Backcountry wardens agree that the country and the people they encounter make this type of law enforcement highly enjoyable.

"Another ranger and I met up with this fellow in the Youngs Creek drainage, just below Hahn Cabin," began Ash. "He gave his name as Larry Mikesell, which we found out later was an alias. It was in November and there was a foot of snow on the ground; we were surprised to see him and he was surprised to see us."

The man was on foot and was dragging what he claimed was trapping gear behind him. Ash and the other ranger followed the man's tracks back to Hahn Cabin, since they were headed in that direction anyway.

"When we got to the cabin we saw that he'd been staying there, and that he'd gotten hold of a key somehow," continued Ash. "We closed up the station and headed back down the trail to contact him and collect the key, but when we reached the spot where we'd talked to him we found he'd dived into the brush as soon as we were out of sight.

"We began tracking him but soon

found he was using "Rat River trapper techniques"—a method used by trappers trying to elude the Mounties in Canada. He kept double-backtracking through a thick spruce bottom for about a mile, then ditched his gear. We found out that the bag we thought had contained traps actually held a double-decker TV antenna. All his other gear was stolen from U.S. Forest Service cabins.

JOHN FRALEY

U. S. Forest Service Wilderness Ranger Gordon Ash (left) confers with FW&P Warden Brian Sommers in the Bob Marshall Wilderness.

"We were worried that he was circling us so we gave up the chase. We didn't know what kind of person we were dealing with and thought he might be dangerous. We filed an incident report when we got out of the backcountry, and eventually found out his real name."

By early January, Forest Service officials had tracked down his address and talked to his roommate, who said he was in the Bob Marshall and wouldn't be out anytime soon. Learning this, law enforcement officers flew into the wilderness by helicopter and saw activity at Big Prairie and Hahn Cabin. They landed at Hahn Cabin and found that the "Burglar" had just left, ditching his pack, snowshoes, and shotgun.

"The officers followed his tracks through the brush but when it got dark they had to call off the search. The next day they followed his tracks and found a camp where he had set up a Forest Service tent. They left a note for him at the camp to identify himself and turn himself in. Later he returned to the camp, found the note, grabbed his sleeping bag, and headed out of the wilderness. Two days later he contacted the press and told them he had spent five days crawling over the snow and almost died hiking the 20 miles out because the Forest Service had stolen his pack and snowshoes."

Ash and another ranger went to the Pyramid Pass trailhead, where the "Burglar" had come out, and found he had left a snowmobile there earlier for his getaway. They skied into the backcountry on his backtrail and found he'd had no trouble scooting over the crusted snow when he came out of the wilderness. Also, they found a Forest Service sleeping bag ditched near Ross Creek and found that he had established various camps and food caches using stolen Forest Service gear.

"This guy had spent Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's at Big Prairie living high off the hog on government grub," said Ash. "We finally figured out the antenna deal: he'd been bragging about watching the Super Bowl at Big Prairie the year before, 30 miles from the nearest road. He must have had a little battery-operated TV, but we never did find it. Turned out he had a grub line between Big Prairie, Basin, and Hahn cabins, and he had his camps for recreating. He had it made."

Evidence at Big Prairie linked the "Bob Burglar" to the facility. "He was sleeping in my bed and taking showers in my residence, and he stole my personal gear." Ash said the man strongly denied the charges through the subsequent trial, but that the evidence to convict him was overwhelming. "He was so obnoxious that his lawyers kept quitting. Finally he ended up representing himself."

His first sentence was relatively lenient. "He came in the next summer and met me at Big Prairie," said Ash. "He was supposed to cut wood to replace all he'd used and pay for all the food he'd eaten and things he'd taken. The whole thing probably would have cost him about $600 and would have been cheap for his long, all-expenses-paid vacation in the backcountry. It would have been a lot cheaper than having an outfitter pack him in."

Unaccountably, the "Burglar" left after cutting only about one-fourth of the required wood, and he refused to pay retribution for the equipment and grub. "So he lost a good job as a flagman when the judge sent him to prison for six months," said Ash.

After the man got out of prison, he filed suit against the Forest Service, but the judge dismissed it as frivolous. "He portrayed himself as a mountain man, but he never lived off the land," said Ash. "He just lived off our grub and facility network. He wasn't a mountain man at all; the only weight he carried was his antenna and miniature TV."

BACKCOUNTRY LAW ENFORCEMENT is hard work, but the wardens and rangers who patrol beyond the road's end are unanimous in their love for their work. Why?

"I'm grinning inside the whole time I'm back there," said Tom Flowers, the FW&P warden who works the Sun River area. It's the country and the people, I guess. I enjoy it so much I'd do it all the time, but that wouldn't be good for my marriage.

"We get constant comments from people about how great the job must be. You have to agree, because it's the best job in Montana." ■

Aerial Acrobat

ROBERT E. BARBER

by BRUCE AUCHLY

IT'S A FUNNY LITTLE BIRD, this snipe, with a body and name of a slapstick vaudevillian.

Who wouldn't laugh at a creature that has a nose one-fifth as long as its body, has eyes placed far enough back on its head to see behind itself, and makes a goat-like bleating sound to attract the opposite sex?

Then there's the name. The moniker "snipe" refers to an old Anglo-Saxon word for snout. Yet for hundreds of years it has also denoted a contemptible person. As Shakespeare wrote in *Othello:*

For I mine own gained knowledge should profane
If I should time expend with such a snipe.

And let's not forget the humor derived by those folks who don't believe this bird of wet meadows and pastures even exists.

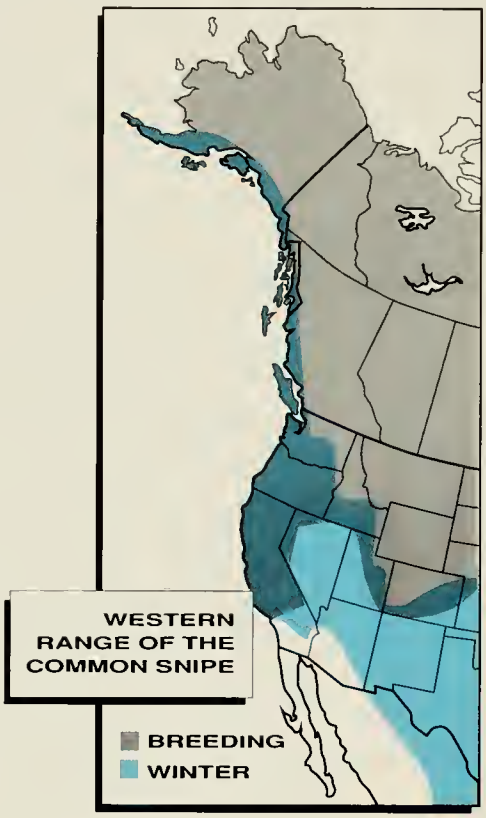
Margaret Adams of Great Falls recalls the day she and two friends were driving and looking for birds. "We were out in the backcountry by Belt. There was a little slough by the road and we saw something fly."

The women stopped their vehicle, got out and stood by the road, looking for what they were sure was a snipe. Before long, three fellows in a pickup drove up and stopped. They asked if the women needed help.

"We said, 'We're looking for snipe.'"

With that the three rowdies guffawed and drove off.

"I'm sure they thought, here are these foolish old women falling for that old snipe hunting trick," Adams says.



Rest assured gentlemen, the lowly common snipe, subject of practical jokes from East Coast fraternities to Montana prairies, lives. No nighttime excursions to swamps armed with clubs and burlap bags, however, are necessary to see and hear the snipe in Montana. P.D. Skaar's *Montana Bird Distribution* lists sightings of the bird in every corner of the state.

"It's very common in Montana," says Dave Ewer of Helena. Ewer has taken part in the Audubon Society's annual breeding bird survey every June for the past eight years. "They like farm pastures that are a little wet. Any farmland that abuts a stream is a great place for snipe."

Similar in appearance to its distant eastern cousin, the woodcock, the snipe is a migratory shorebird. Adult birds are about 11 inches long, including the bill, which averages 2.5 inches. Wingspread can reach 18 inches. The bird weighs about 3.5 ounces. Examination of its feathered coat reveals a mottled mixture of browns, blacks, and whites, perfect for a ground-nesting bird. The white-tipped tail has a reddish-orange stripe across a black band.

A few birds overwinter in Montana, but most head to warmer climes. "We are at the northern edge of their wintering range," says George Holton, a retired FW&P fisheries biologist and self-proclaimed compulsive birder. When snipe do spend the winter in Montana, they are found along springs or warm streams that don't freeze, for the birds must continue to find food—worms and insects. Even in subzero temperatures, ice-free water will contain aquatic invertebrates, Holton says. "I've only seen them [in the winter] near water."

But such winter habitat is marginal. Their preferred winter range lies south of a line roughly from Seattle to Denver, then east to Washington, D.C. Snipe usually concentrate in California and along the Gulf Coast and are found as far south as Brazil.

Migration north begins in February and March. Montana's first birds often arrive during the first 10 days of March. Heavy spring flights don't begin to show up until mid-April. Like many migrants, snipe are at the mercy of the fickle spring weather. Warm and cold fronts can speed up or bring spring activity to a screeching halt, albeit temporarily.

In uncooperative weather, snipe may arrive in an area still covered with snow. Then the birds concentrate, waiting for a warm spell. Normally, snipe do not move north or south in large flocks, like ducks or geese. They

TOM J. ULRICH

Never far from water, snipe are common in Montana, nesting throughout the state.

are more solitary.

Males arrive first in the spring, with females appearing 10 days to two weeks later. During the interlude, the males establish territories and begin making a weird bleating or winnowing sound. Often heard but rarely associated with snipe, the eerie, haunting tone has been described as a pulsating tremolo, like a rapidly repeated "huhuhuhuhuhuhuhuhu." It's not a call but a sound created by the bird's outer tail feathers as it dives through the air.

Trying to attract females, the male flies 100 yards or more above the ground, then dives at a 45-degree angle. The sound begins as the bird expands its tail and reaches speeds of 25 to 35 miles per hour. The wings play a role, interrupting air flow and causing the alternating tones that produce the tremulous effect. The wings also keep the rushing air from vibrating the tail to

pieces. All this renders the bleating audible for hundreds of yards, but makes it difficult to pinpoint.

"They're easy to hear but hard to see," Ewer says, "because they are so small and so fast."

Throw in the fact that most of the bleating takes place at dawn and dusk, and it's understandable how ancient peoples thought the sound was supernatural.

Besides producing the bleating sound, the males put on an aerial acrobatics show that would be the envy of any precision flying team. The birds do somersaults and fly upside down. Some biologists believe that fanning the tail in flight catches the light and reflects the red band near the end. To a female looking for a mate, it must be a powerful advertisement.

ONCE A FEMALE arrives on the breeding ground, the males act like teenagers at a high school dance. Besides their aerial displays, males will crowd around her on the ground, strutting, bowing and scraping, especially if she lands near two or more territories. Like any self-respecting prom queen, she feigns indifference to the boys' amorous high jinks. Some of the males will even try to herd her into their territories.

Relying on a keen eye, or some other genetic yardstick, the female eventually picks out a male. They mate, usually several times, and she begins to search for a nesting spot. Meanwhile, the male bird, a complete cad, will continue to mate with other females that enter his territory.

As ground nesters near water, snipe face the usual assortment of predators, along with occasional spring floods. The first of these handicaps is coped with through good camouflage, and the second through a firmly built nest. The female first scrapes a depression in the ground, then molds grasses into the shape of a cup. She finishes by adding more grasses and leaves for a lining. The nest usually stays dry, even when surrounded by water in a marsh. No doubt the birds build their nests near water because that's where their favorite food—worms—live.

Worms, insect larvae, spiders, and beetles make up the majority of the snipe's diet. The bird probes blindly with its long bill about one-half inch into the soil. With the sensitive tip of its hard but flexible bill, the snipe can locate food underground. When it finds a worm or insect, the bird raises the top of its bill, seizes the morsel, and pulls it out of the ground to swallow.

After completion of the nest the female begins to lay eggs. Four is the most common number. Like the adult birds, the eggs are camouflaged: brown or olive and speckled with darker blotches. They are about the size and shape of a large olive. Incubation follows, and takes approximately 20 days.

HATCHING OCCURS over several hours, often with an hour or two between eggs. Nesting and hatching take place from May through August with most eggs hatching in June. If a nest and eggs are lost early in the season the female will replace them.

The first youngsters out of the egg provide mom with all sorts of problems. Immediately after hatching the chick lays motionless and exhausted. Yet within an hour, the chick is dry,

Where to Find Snipe

Common snipe are found practically anyplace in Montana that has non-alkaline water and open spaces during spring and summer, from low-elevation mudflats to beaver ponds near timberline. In the central part of the state snipe frequent irrigation projects, especially alongside open fields and meadows. In eastern Montana, the birds are often found near backwater areas of major rivers and streams and prairie potholes.

The following locations, listed as shorebird viewing areas in the *Montana Wildlife Viewing Guide*, should provide opportunities for viewing snipe:

Western Montana

Ninepipe National Wildlife Refuge and Wildlife Management Area, south of Ronan.

Smith Lake Waterfowl Production Area, west of Kalispell.

Brown's Lake, east of Ovando.

Canyon Ferry Wildlife Management Area, north of Townsend.

Cattail Marsh Nature Trail, north end of Clark Canyon Reservoir just south of Dillon.

Red Rock Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, east of Monida.

Central Montana

Freezout Lake Wildlife Management Area, between Fairfield and Choteau.

BR-12, northwest of Zurich.

Hailstone National Wildlife Refuge, east of Rapelje.

Eastlick Pond/Big Lake Waterfowl Management Area, west of Billings near Molt.

Eastern Montana

Lake Mason National Wildlife Refuge, west of Roundup.

Yellowtail Dam Afterbay, near Fort Smith.

Medicine Lake National Wildlife Refuge, east of Medicine Lake.

Fox Lake Wildlife Management Area, south of Lambert.

JAN I. WASSINK

Most snipe winter south of a line extending roughly from Seattle to Denver, then east to Washington D.C. The heaviest spring flights appear in Montana during mid-April.

standing up, running around the nest, even over mom. It's mostly legs and feet, what one author referred to as "a gangling animated powder puff."

The female has the responsibility of sitting on the remaining eggs while trying to keep the hatched chicks under her partly opened wing. When only an egg or two remains, the male will help out, herding the older chicks away from the nest while the female stays with the eggs and any chicks still drying off.

The commotion would seem to be a perfect predator magnet. But the chicks are born with the ability hide as soon as their down dries. They are camouflaged and remain motionless when in danger. Adult snipe will sometimes try to lure intruders away from the nest; however, they do not have a set act like a killdeer, which pretends to have a broken wing. Snipe use a variety of methods to draw attention to themselves, often showing off their red and black tail feathers, then running or flying away. Snipe sitting on fence posts usually have their chicks hidden nearby.

"They would rather stay put than fly," Ewer says. "You can almost walk up on them before they fly. Their camouflage is incredible. They are very hard to see when they're standing still."

The chicks grow fast. They double their weight the first week, again the second week of life, and once more during the third week. By their second or third week, the youngsters are flying. That allows the birds to begin heading south by mid to late summer. Fall migration begins in earnest in late August and continues steadily for the next two months. As in spring, weather plays a major role in hastening or delaying the birds along their migration path.

Fall migrating snipe do not band together like waterfowl in large flocks, though they do head to staging areas, such as edges of mudflats. "They are pretty much solitary birds," Ewer says. "Occasionally, you'll put up four or five or six in a pasture."

Although snipe were popular birds to hunt 100 years ago and in the early part of this century, fear of declining populations led the federal government to place a 13-year moratorium on snipe hunting from 1941 to 1953. When hunting was resumed in 1954 a generation gap existed that has never closed. A fall hunting season for snipe still exists in Montana, but few people hunt them.

Nowadays, a snipe hunt to most people means a prank played on the unwary. Perhaps the real joke lies with the unbelieving. ■

Cruwys
Hits a Triple

by William Phippen

Bozeman wildlife artist Roger Cruwys has done it yet again.

When his painting of a pair of speedy wigeons winging over the northeastern Montana prairie was selected last October for reproduction as the state's 1994 waterfowl stamp, it marked his third win in the annual competition. Cruwys' paintings were previously selected for the 1987 and 1989 stamps.

Cruwys' colorful rendition of these agile, twisting, turning fliers was chosen by a panel of four judges in Helena. Placing second and third, respectively, were paintings by Zee Huang of Hamilton and Robert Kercher of Great Falls.

As has been the case since its inception in 1986, the competition was open only to Montana residents and all entrants had to confine their works to a central theme—for 1994, not more than three American wigeons in a prairie pothole setting. All of the entries were unsigned and entrants were not identified until all ballots had been tabulated.

Judges for the 1994 competition were Dick Duffy, a Helena art dealer, Bev Veneziano, art director for FW&P's *Montana Outdoors* magazine, Jeff Herbert, FW&P's statewide waterfowl coordinator, and Tom Hinz, upland bird and small game program manager in FW&P's Wildlife Division.

A full-time artist, Cruwys is a self-taught painter

First place — Roger Cruwys

Second place — Zee Huang

Third place — Robert Kercher

whose dog portraits, striking renditions of game birds, and other outdoor scenes have earned him praise through shows in major art galleries, inclusion in private collections, and publication in popular sporting magazines.

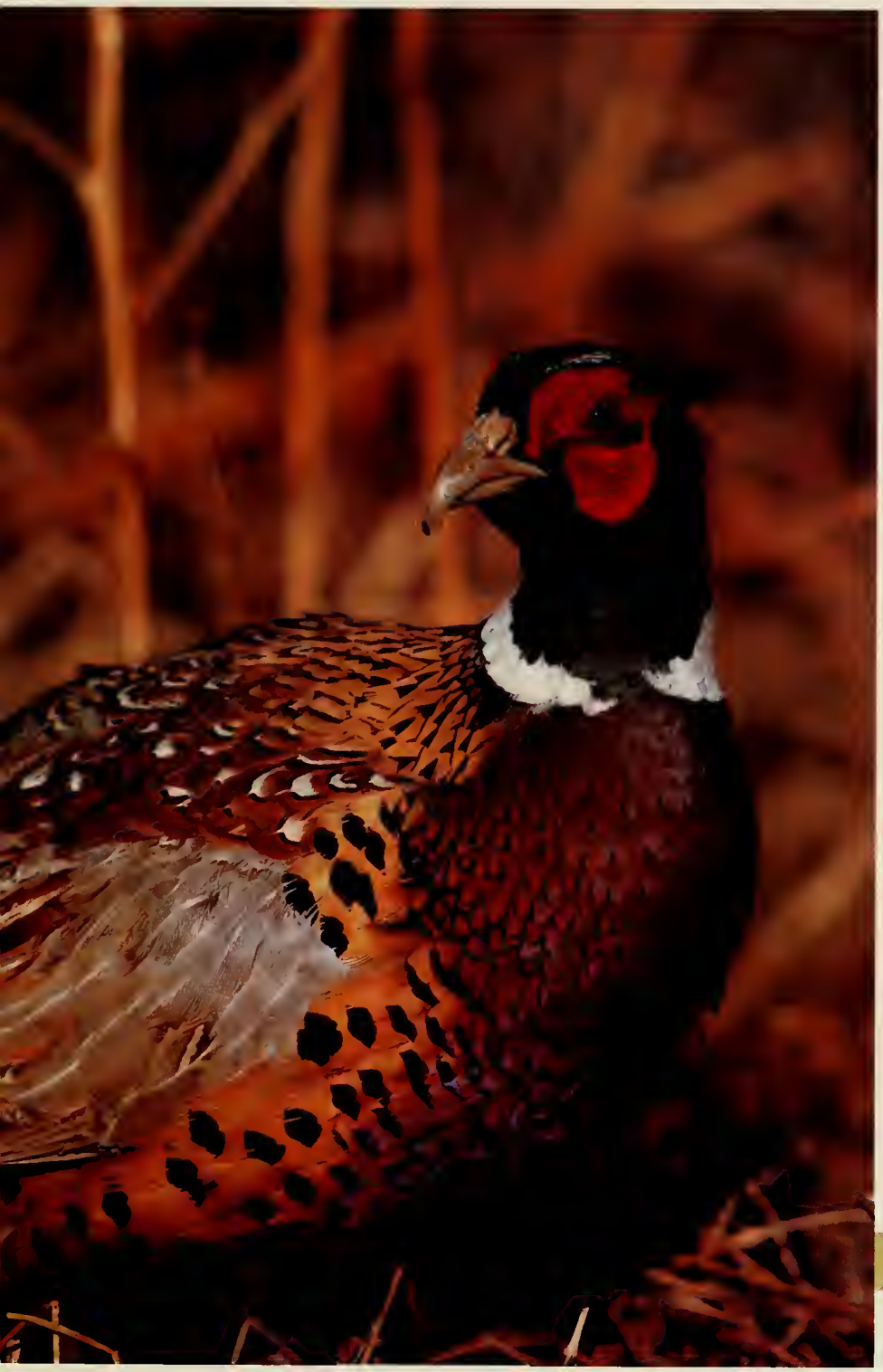
He also has been successful in state conservation stamp competitions other than Montana's. Cruwys has been a finalist in trout, waterfowl, or other conservation stamp contests in Ohio, California, Nevada, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Kentucky, South Carolina, and Oregon, and his works have placed in the top 10% of the federal "duck stamp" competition.

Originally from upstate New York, Cruwys began his professional career as a landscape architect/designer after receiving his bachelor's degree from Syracuse University and his master's from the University of California. But an unrelenting interest in the out-of-doors and an eye for the natural world, particularly the wild creatures that inhabit it, led him to his present profession.

Beginning in 1986, hunters have been required to possess a state waterfowl stamp in addition to a federal "duck stamp" to hunt waterfowl in Montana. The 1985 Legislature established the stamp and authorized the Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks to sell the stamp and market related items. In 1992, stamps were sold to approximately 16,000 hunters and 8,000 stamp collectors throughout the country. Funds garnered from the sale of the $5 stamps and related artwork are used solely to enhance and develop Montana wetlands and associated upland habitat for the long-term benefit of waterfowl.

Since the first state waterfowl stamp was sold in 1986, over $1 million has been raised to fund wetland enhancement projects Montana. In 1992, over 40 projects were initiated to enhance important waterfowl habitat. ■

SMALL BUT IMPORTANT:



MICHAEL & PATSY FRIBLEY

The Milk River Wildlife Management Areas

by WILLIAM PHIPPEN

TO MONTANA HUNTERS and others interested in the welfare of the state's wildlife, the words "wildlife management area" most commonly conjure up images of elk and deer on winter range or myriad species of waterfowl and other aquatic birds settling into a large lake, reservoir, or wetland area.

But wildlife management areas under the Big Sky provide far more than that. Many of the state's smaller WMAs have earned respect for the rich wildlife habitats they protect and the many species they support, if not their magnitude.

LANDS LEGACY

Two such areas are tucked into a curve of the meandering Milk River along Montana's Hi-Line. Recognized by those who know of their existence as the Milk River WMAs, Areas "7" and "8" may not be well known by a majority of Montanans, but they represent the diversity in function that has purposefully been built into the state's WMA system.

The areas, which lie approximately 20 miles northeast of Malta in Phillips County, were acquired along with seven other smaller parcels through a lease agreement with the federal Bureau of Reclamation in 1953. During construction of the Milk River Irrigation project by BuRec in the early 1950s, a number of area residents, including hunters, conservationists, landowners, and the local game warden, saw the wildlife habitat and recreational value of some 4,500 acres of lands slated for canals or irrigation facilities. Conversations with the then Department of Fish and Game subsequently led to meetings with BuRec and eventual lease of the properties.

Area 7, with its 382 acres of marshlands, cottonwood/shrub bottoms, and adjacent uplands, is managed primarily for waterfowl, although white-tailed deer and ring-necked pheasants are also important game species. Sharp-tailed grouse, Hungarian partridge, beaver, muskrat, and many species of songbirds are common there as well.

Although most of the upland areas are native range, 20 acres of previously farmed land on the WMA was recently reseeded to a dense grass mixture benefiting nesting waterfowl, upland gamebirds, and other wildlife species. Stands of cottonwoods along the Milk River bottom provide excellent whitetail habitat and are popular among bowhunters. In addition, the river's oxbows provide important nesting habitat for Canada geese and several species of ducks.

Over the years, the major developments at Area 7 have centered on a pond constructed years ago to rear northern pike. Although the pond's usefulness as a hatchery for nearby Nelson Reservoir has long since passed, its value as nesting and brood-rearing habitat for waterfowl has received increased emphasis.

Recent improvements at the pond include: (1) installing a water control structure to regulate water levels and improve brood habitat for ducks and geese, (2) repairing 400 feet of existing dike by adding a gravel cap and driving in sheetpiling to solve a seepage problem, (3) adding a rock spillway, and (4) placing weirs to prevent fish, especially carp, from entering the pond and reducing vegetation intended as a food source for waterfowl.

The dikes of three other ponds within the WMA have also been reworked recently and water control structures installed to maximize waterfowl production capability. In addition, various types of waterfowl nesting structures have been placed throughout the WMA. Funding for these projects has come from a variety of sources, including Ducks Unlimited and the state's duck stamp program.

Area 8 includes 961 acres of upland and wetland habitats that

Although Areas 7 and 8 are managed primarily for waterfowl (opposite), they provide habitat for numerous wildlife species.

whitetail doe—BARBARA THOMAS

muskrat—JAN L. WASSINK

snow goose—MIKE LOGAN, *mallard with young*—NEAL & MARY JANE MISHLER, *eared grebe with young*—HARRY ENGELS, *Canada geese*—ROONEY SCHLECHT

support a plethora of game and nongame species. Most of the management activity over the years has been directed toward a 470-acre marsh that was originally so choked with cattails that it provided little more than winter and escape cover for pheasants and white-tailed deer. With the goal of improving habitat for waterfowl, a dike was constructed in 1956 to raise the water level in the marsh, thereby flooding and killing the cattails. During this process, six islands were built that, in addition to one natural island created by the flooding, have become favorite nesting sites for Canada geese, several species of ducks, and various shorebirds.

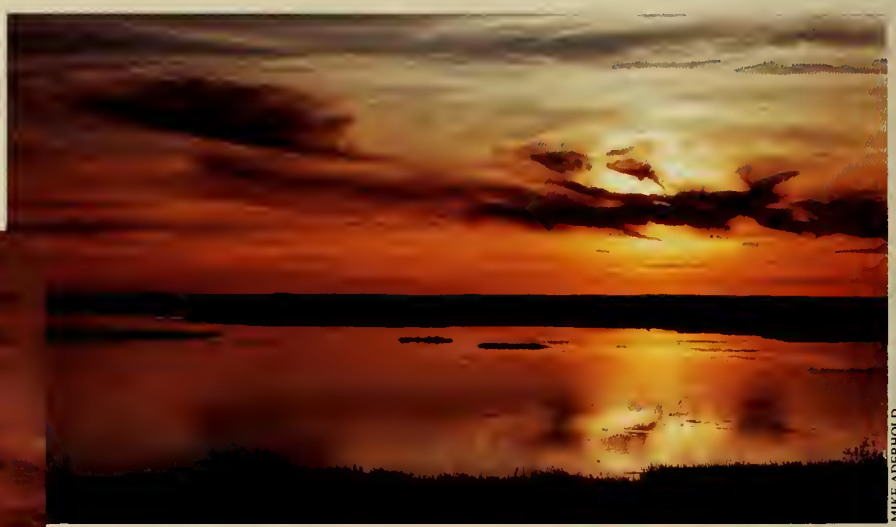
A band of cattails around the marsh still provides excellent winter and escape cover for pheasants and whitetails. Meanwhile, most of the marsh is a mixture of open water and scattered stands of cattails, just the prescription for attracting ducks and geese.

Recently, Ducks Unlimited worked with FW&P on a project reminiscent of the 1956 wetland project. A 2,500-foot, L-shaped dike was constructed around a 95-acre cattail-choked marsh so the water level could be raised, creating a mixture of open water and cattail stands. During dike construction, numerous small pair ponds (used by duck pairs in early spring while establishing territories) were created from the borrow sites and two waterfowl nesting islands were built in the new pond. Water control structures will allow managers to regulate water flow to both the new pond and the adjacent pair ponds. Several groundwater monitoring wells also were drilled to allow neighboring landowners to assess any impacts of FW&P's management of the area.

Small, yet uniquely valuable. That's the best way to look at Areas 7 and 8. Look beyond their size and you'll see their value to hunters as well as those who simply enjoy viewing ducks, geese, deer, pheasants, and all the creatures that inhabit these havens for wildlife beside the Milk River. ■

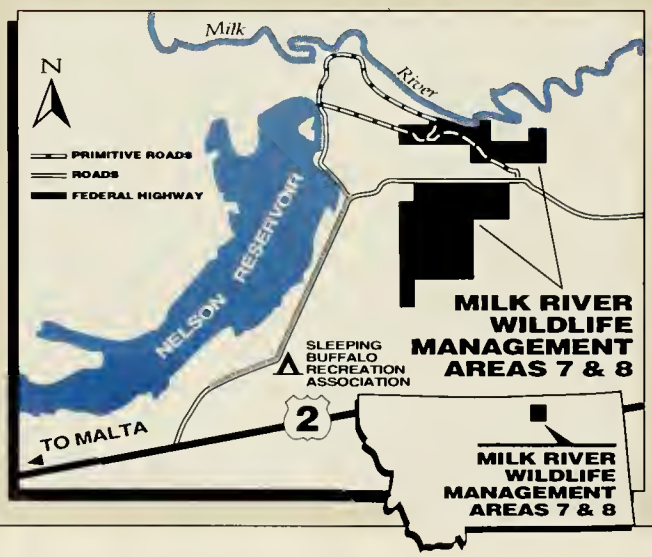
The primary goal of the Milk River WMAs is to provide wetland habitat for wildlife, particularly waterfowl, as well as recreational opportunities.

TOM J. ULRICH



MIKE ADERHOLD

The Milk River Wildlife Management Areas



Location: In Phillips County in northeastern Montana, approximately 20 miles northeast of Malta.

Size: Area 7—382 acres; Area 8—961 acres.

Acquisition date: Leased from U.S. Bureau of Reclamation since 1953.

Access: Take Highway 2 from Malta east to Sleeping Buffalo turnoff, travel about 3 miles north to Areas 7 and 8.

Management goal: To provide riparian/wetland habitats for wildlife, particularly waterfowl, and to provide public recreational opportunities.

Hunting opportunities: Hunting opportunities exist for waterfowl, upland birds, and deer. For safety reasons, deer hunters are allowed to hunt only with shotgun, muzzleloader, or bow and arrow.

Fishing opportunities: Area 7 provides fishing opportunities along roughly one mile of the Milk River.

Wildlife viewing: White-tailed deer, upland gamebirds, furbearers, and numerous small mammals are present on the WMA year-round. Waterfowl, shorebirds, raptors, and a host of songbirds can be seen during much of the year.

Dances With Grouse

by Dave Books

AH, SPRING. The days lengthen, the sun grows warmer, and the somber cloak of winter gradually gives way to a riot of life and color. Montana's five species of grouse, shy and retiring for most of the year in their muted coats of brown and gray, are transformed into bold, beautiful creatures, dancing, strutting, hooting, and drumming in time to nature's quickening pulse rate. The occasion, of course, for this avian pomp and pageantry is the mating season—a time when males of the grouse clan put on elaborate performances to win the heart of some fair lady...or ladies, since these birds are polygamous. Perhaps, as scientists maintain, these bizarre rituals have to do with territoriality, social hierarchy, and natural selection. Or could surviving another Montana winter just make them want to dance?

CONRAD ROWE

CONRAD ROWE

Sage grouse

CONRAD ROWE

Although male sage grouse arrive on the strutting grounds, or leks, as early as February, courtship activity doesn't peak until April. For the first month or so, the leks are inhabited only by males, who stake out territories and defend them against other males. Sage grouse typically use the same leks year after, although occasionally young males may try to establish a new one. More often than not these impromptu leks do not succeed.

The number of males on a lek can vary widely, from a dozen or so to several hundred. As the males jockey for dominance and possession of preferred mating territories, fights occasionally break out. Although these altercations are sometimes bloody, they are rarely fatal, with vanquished birds retreating to less desirable strutting spots to await another day.

Strutting, which begins before dawn and continues for an hour or two after sunrise, involves a complex sequence of movements and sounds in which the tail is raised and fanned and the esophageal sacs are inflated until they resemble two rubber balls bobbing on the bird's chest. When the trapped air in the esophagus is suddenly released, it produces a peculiar plopping sound.

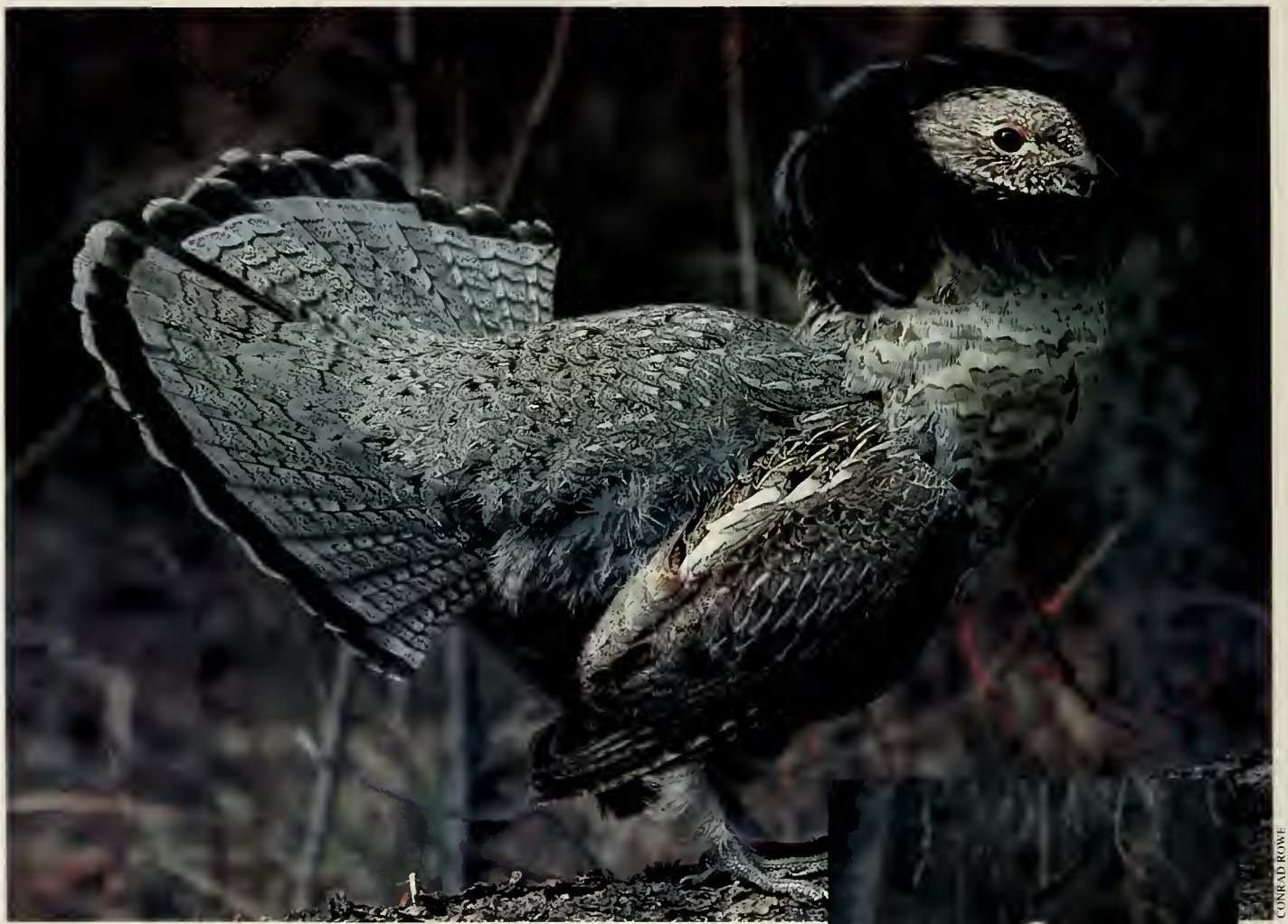
CONRAD ROWE

CONRAD ROWE

Sharp-tailed grouse

Sharptails arrive on their communal dancing grounds in early spring, usually in March. Sharptail leks are much smaller than sage grouse leks, with the number of male birds averaging only about a dozen. Like sage grouse, sharptails vie for choice central territories within the lek and defend them vigorously. Although much territorial defense involves "ritual fighting" in which the birds merely stare each other down or make short lunges, occasionally two males will leap into the air and flail each other with claws, beaks, and wings.

Sharptails utter a variety of clucks, cackles, squeaks, whines, and cooing noises during their courtship displays. These vocalizations, along with "flutter-jumping" (a noisy movement in which the bird jumps a few feet in the air and lands again), "tail rattling," and "dancing"—in which males spread their wings, raise their tail, lower their head, and scoot forward while stamping their feet—make the sharptail lek a noisy beehive of activity. On a quiet morning, the commotion can be heard up to a mile away. Like windup toys activated by remote control, the birds start and stop their frenzied dancing in perfect synchrony—one moment the lek is buzzing with life and motion, and the next it is eerily quiet. Then, as if in response to some invisible signal, the dance begins anew.



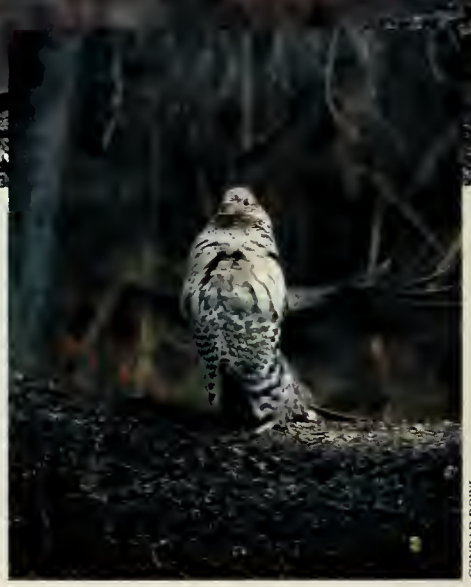
CONRAD ROWE

Ruffed grouse

Unlike their prairie cousins, ruffed grouse don't use leks in their mating display. Their repertoire consists of drumming and strutting. Drumming has a two-fold purpose: It advertises the male's presence to nearby females, and issues a challenge to neighboring males.

Although ruffed grouse drum most frequently during the breeding season, the hollow, muffled sound may be heard any time of year. At the peak of the mating season, a grouse may drum continually for several hours at three- to five-minute intervals. Morning and evening are favored times, but drumming may take place any hout of the day or night.

The drumming site may be a stump or a boulder, but most often it is a fallen log, large in size, usually moss-covered, and well along in decay. The same log is often used year after year by a succession of grouse; when a drummer is killed by a predator, his log is immediately occupied by another bird. Typically only one spot on the log is used for drumming.



CONRAD ROWE

The drumming sequence, which lasts about eight seconds, starts slowly, picks up speed, then ends on a single, weak note. It is produced by the bird's rapid, powerful wing strokes striking the air with sufficient force to create a vacuum. The bird doesn't clap its wings together or beat them against the drumming log.

On sighting an intruder, a drumming male raises and spreads his tail and erects the ebony ruffs on the side of his neck. Marching slowly at first toward the interloper, he makes a hissing sound, then rushes quickly forward, shaking his head and hissing loudly.

DAVE BOOKS

DAVE BOOKS

Blue grouse

Male blue grouse begin to establish territories on lower mountain slopes and foothills in April, or as soon as snow conditions permit. They prefer ridges near the lower margins of tree cover, open south slopes with trees nearby, or narrow drainages with scattered conifer thickets. Displaying is typically done in openings or clearings with escape cover nearby; courtship is in full swing by early to mid-May.

The primary display activity performed by blue grouse is known as "hooting," in which the male raises and spreads his tail and opens the feathers of his neck to expose raspberry-colored neck sacs surrounded by snow-white feathers. His swollen eye-combs change color rapidly, shifting from bright yellow to deep orange-red. The hooting sound, a low-frequency "ump-ump-ump-ump-ump" emanating from the air sacs, can be heard up to 100 yards away on a still day.

When a male blue grouse sees another grouse, he fans his tail like a turkey, cocks it sharply forward and, with head lowered and wings dragging, rushes the intruder, uttering a deep "whoot" note. If the intruder turns out to be a receptive female, the male struts around her, showing off his handsome plumage. Territorial males occasionally advertise their presence with a "flutter-jump," a short wing clap made while leaping a foot or so in the air. On hearing a wing clap, other nearby males usually respond with a flutter-jump of their own.

DONALD M JONES

CONRAD ROWE

Spruce grouse

Male spruce grouse establish their mating territories in fairly dense stands of conifers, choosing small openings for strutting and display flights. When strutting, the bird's tail is cocked steeply, exposing the white-tipped feathers underneath, and his crimson eye-combs are engorged.

Males may emit a low-pitched hooting sound when females are in the vicinity, but spruce grouse are less vocal than blue grouse. While strutting, the male usually walks forward slowly, rustling, fanning, or flicking his tail feathers. On approaching a female, he may alternately bob his head up and down, tilt it to the side to expose an eye-comb to her view, or flick his wings. Taking several rapid steps toward her, he may suddenly snap his tail open with a swishing sound, and hiss.

Males attempt to drive intruding males from their territory by rushing at them uttering throaty hisses and, if necessary, attacking them with wings and beak. Male spruce grouse also do a version of the flutter-jump in which they fly vertically upward, sometimes perching in a tree and other times dropping back to the ground. The drop to the ground is accompanied by two loud wing claps.

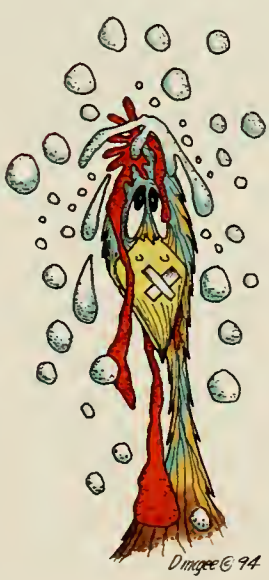
The Desperate Danger of Talking Turkey

story by DAN VICHOREK
illustrations by DAVE MCGEE

THE INTELLECTUAL CAPACITIES of domestic turkeys are well known. Many the investor in livestock futures has been chagrined to learn that domestic turkeys, given the chance, will look straight up into the sky during a cloudburst, seeking the origin of things until they drown, a matter of minutes it is said. Similarly, tame turkeys caught in a hailstorm of potentially fatal proportion will stand a few feet outside the portals of safety and watch with fascination as their companions one by one suffer skull fractures and go into their death frenzies, until not a one is left standing.

Given this reputation of the species, it stands to reason that guys who take up arms and go out to attempt the duly permitted bagging of a wild turkey should expect no respect. Especially when they come home empty-handed. Only those of us who have tried this sport are aware of the incredible guile, the uncanny wiles, the near supernatural cunning of the wild turkey.

Consider, for example, the miraculous camouflage that is necessary if an ordinary human is to have even a forlorn prayer of bringing home the bird. Some of us are old enough to remember when unschooled turkey hunters blundered pathetically around the piney woods and gumbo knobs in Levis and flannel shirts with gimme hats, carrying a rusty old pumpgun. No more!



Back in those days, we didn't know the orthodox uniform for turkey hunters. Then somebody brought some hunting magazines for reading material in the elk camp outhouse one year. A little reading quickly showed us that as turkey hunters we were not only incompetent but completely out of style. The shame of it. When turkey season rolled around again, most of us had been to the war surplus store and outfitted ourselves handsomely. The surplus store had gear to make invisible the soldiers of nearly every civilized and semi-civilized country in the world. Some of us took the East German option, some went Swedish, or Czech, and some daringly mixed their blocs, with pants from Yugoslavia and coats

from Norway or Argentina, for example. Some of us even bought little makeup compacts and painted our faces black and green, but not all of us could handle that. Others among us hid their pasty faces with the dashingly macho net scarves often seen concealing the identity of Middle Eastern terrorists on the evening news.

Note for comparison that seekers after the wiliest big game species in Montana, even the noble wapiti, the elusive and prized bighorn, the mighty-antlered moose, the legendarily binoculared pronghorn; hunters for all of these are required by law to wear 400 square inches of hunter orange, lest they be bagged by other hunters.

The fish and game commissioners, wise men that they are, knew that no turkey hunter would ever bag another of the same, and therefore dispensed with the hunter orange for Nimrods of this elevated category. Turkey hunters are advised, however, not to wear red or blue, those being the fighting and breeding colors of the fierce and untamed wild turkey gobbler.

The consequences of being mistaken for a turkey can vary in severity, depending upon who or what does the mistaking. Ancient turkey hunting lore, often written with soft-nosed bullets on the walls of hunting lodges going back to before the Civil War, is full of tragic and comic tales about such mix-ups. Unfortunately these often are quite ungrammatical, so I will tidy them up a little here.

Basically, it seems that historic turkey hunting mistakes fall into two main categories of error: mistakes by varmints, and mistakes by other turkey hunters. In both cases, the victims tend to be hunters who have concealed themselves, especially if they also have attempted to deceive turkeys into believing that other turkeys are afoot, keenly ready either for fighting or...well, mating.

CONSIDER WHAT HAPPENED to Fremont Snood in the legendary Snaggletooth Forest of Kentucky on March 30, 1887 (as translated from the blurry scribbling on a piece of homemade parchment found under the buttplate of a classic antique turkey gun). According to this fragile manuscript, Snood, considered in his day a bit of a layabout and even a no-good, though actually an inventor and contemplator of deeper questions, had developed, after long experimentation, a turkey call of such fidelity and range that all who heard it were paralyzed with amazement.

Nevertheless, cautious workman that he was, Snood knew that field testing would be needed before his invention could be sent into the world to rehabilitate his distorted reputation as a useless bum. Accordingly, he betook himself to that gloomy Snaggletooth Forest for real world testing. There he found an overhanging gorse bush that fit him perfectly and crawled under. He was armed with a classic turkey gun.

After a brief session of tuning, Snood began calling turkeys in dead earnest, as they say. Despite his best efforts, the woods remained silent. Woodsman that he was, Snood should have seen trouble coming. The woods normally are a noisy place, full of rioting dickey birds, an unruly chorus of ear-splitting squalling, howling, jabbering, and other racket signifying a full range of biological activity. Silence in the woods means the most dangerous animal in the forest, the bully of the underbrush, the top dog of the tall timber, is about. Actually, Snood probably was not worried because he thought he was the holder of all these titles himself.

Wrong. Unknown to Snood, all the woodland hoodlums had been run out a

few weeks previous by the new king of the forest, a mutant wild gobbler full five feet tall (according to available estimates) with feet the size of a man's hand, talons curving cruelly, and a beak five inches long with razor-sharp, ivory edges. This was the beast that heard Snood's experimental call from five miles away. Spreading wings that looked like a total eclipse of the sun, this enormous specimen, this turkey dinner fit for a platoon, sailed with pterodactyl menace from the top of the tallest tree in the forest toward that distant gorse bush.

Snood heard nothing as the gobbler glided to earth a hundred yards away. Truth to tell, Snood was a sort of musician, and the pure pear-shaped notes of his turkey call charmed him to the point that his natural alertness was compromised. With even ordinary luck, he would have been the Stradivari of turkey call makers.

But alas, Snood and all his family going back to the flood and in this direction down to his great-great-great grandson's tragic recent invention of the outboard-powered two-man bog shoes, has been without luck even approaching the ordinary. To shorten the story, that Goliath of a gobbler was sore in need of female companionship. When he heard that heartbreakingly sad call of a lonely hen coming from that gorse bush, he lost his head and charged into the middle of it.

There he instantly fastened his keen beak onto the first thing he saw, which was Snood's remarkably prominent right ear. From that point on, things didn't seem quite right to the gobbler, but he was all worked up, had an investment in the task, and in the midst of savage and joyful gobbling, punctuated by the awful yowling of his victim, that giant throwback to primeval bogs proceeded to work an outrage upon the person of Fremont Snood. Of course, the perpetrator soon knew that he had made an awful mistake, broke off his attack and flew at top speed toward Tennessee.

Later commentators, seeking to further sully the reputation of the Snood family, said that turkey lust could never get the best of any armed man with gumption, no matter what dimension the turkey. Easy for them to say. Dang thing took a V-shaped slice right out of Snood's ear, and ruined a perfectly good hunting shirt.

There is nothing we can do for Fremont Snood today, but to take him for an example, perhaps. He could serve as the patron saint of guys who disguise themselves to be totally invisible in the bushes and then, in this meat-hungry world, make noises like a turkey dinner. Such adventurers might want to contemplate the fate of Fremont Snood, as they consider the range of interesting experiences that might befall them. ■

While this story is meant to tickle the funnybone, it's ***not*** *meant to make light of the need for safety while hunting turkeys. Montana's safety record has been good, but serious accidents are not uncommon in other parts of the country. Please see the "Catchall" (page 31) for a list of turkey hunting safety tips.*—Editor

SUMMER RAINS BROUGHT FLOATERS TO SMITH RIVER IN 1993

Like trout to a salmonfly hatch, floaters flocked to Montana's Smith River in 1993. "We had a record number of floaters last year," says Doug Habermann, FW&P's Smith River manager. For the first time since record-keeping began in 1983, the annual number of floaters passed the 3,000 mark, totaling 3,688. The figures and Habermann's comments are reflected in the recently released Smith River annual report.

The reason for the record number of floaters lies in last year's steady rainfall. Until late June, rain kept the Smith River at near-normal levels. But the rains continued through the traditionally dry months of late summer, falling at a 245%-of-normal clip from July through September. "The amount of water allowed more people to float," Habermann says.

Last year was the first year floaters faced a daily limit on the Smith: nine launches a day, with nine launches a week set aside for outfitters during the peak season. The peak season runs from late May through mid-July. Applications for the 1994 float season are now available at all FW&P offices.

Of the floaters in 1993, 86% were private and 12% were outfitted. The remaining 2% were administrative. Administrative floats ranged from 18 river ranger patrols to three law enforcement floats, and three trips by archaeologists studying prehistoric rock art in the canyon. The 18 ranger patrols was a record, the most on-river time ever.

Nonresident use of the Smith constituted 17% of all groups. Despite a popular perception, outfitted trips did not account for most of the nonresident floaters, Habermann says. Of the 941 nonresident floaters, 412, or 44%, came as part of private groups that included Montana residents. Just 220 nonresident floaters (24%) used outfitters on the Smith in 1993. "The majority of nonresidents who floated the Smith came as private floaters in a group with Montana residents," Habermann says.

In addition to limiting floaters, 1993 marked the first year floaters were required to declare campsites before launching on the 61-mile trip. A survey found that 10% of floaters said they felt crowded at their campsites during the high-use season. Floaters were also asked to rank the 26 campsites. Overall, 86% of the campsites were rated good, with 11% fair, and 3% poor.

DAVE BOOKS

A record number of floaters visited the Smith in 1993.

Copies of the Smith River annual report are available by contacting the FW&P Region 4 office, P.O. Box 6610, 4600 Giant Springs Road, Great Falls, MT 59406, or by calling (406) 454-3441.

FW&P regulations allow nine launches a day on the Smith, with one launch per day reserved for outfitted use. On Tuesdays and Wednesdays during the high-use season (May 21 to July 2, 1994) outfitters will be allowed two launches daily.

Although summer water levels for the upcoming season are impossible to forecast, permit applications are available at all FW&P offices. Applicants are asked to list first, second, and third choices for launch dates. Applications are processed on a first-come, first-served basis. If any dates fill up, applications for those dates go into a drawing.

"All outfitted launch dates that are not reserved by one week in advance will also be available to private floaters," Habermann says. "This allows for some last-minute opportunities."—*Bruce Auchly, Region Four (Great Falls) information officer*

APPLICATIONS FOR MOOSE, SHEEP, AND GOAT DRAWINGS DUE MAY 1

Licenses to hunt moose, bighorn sheep, and mountain goats in Montana are some of the most coveted on the continent. Thousands of prospective hunters submit applications each spring with prayers they will be lucky enough to draw one of the few hundred licenses available for that year. In 1993, for example, applications for 723 moose licenses statewide were received from 23,690 hopeful hunters, making this license the hardest to obtain of all Montana hunting licenses.

So it's important that hunters hoping to set their sights on one of these trophy big game animals this fall be aware that **the application date for these species has been moved up from June 1, as it was in the past, to May 1 this year.**

The 1993 Legislature authorized the change to give hunters more time to plan for what may prove to be a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. In fact, because licenses for these

species will now be drawn and mailed to recipients in June each year, successful applicants now should have approximately two extra months to prepare for their hunts. And preparation should be of the utmost importance to successful applicants. Not only are these licenses sought by thousands of people, but hunters lucky enough to draw one are not eligible to apply for a similar license for seven years.

With the rule-making authority given it by the legislature, the Fish, Wildlife & Parks Commission accepted public comment on the proposal before making the change in February. Says Glenn Erickson, management bureau chief for FW&P's Wildlife Division in Helena, "These hunts are so special that we agreed it would be appropriate to give those who have drawn licenses a little more time to prepare. It may entail a little extra work on the department's part, but it seems worth the effort."

Applications for the moose, sheep, and goat drawings will be available at license agents statewide around April 1. The deadline for applying for antelope, special elk, and deer B licenses and permits remains June 1, and to enter these drawings hunters will need to submit a second application. Regulations governing the hunting of all these species will appear, as they have previously, in the big game hunting regulations published annually by the department. Those regulations should be available at department license agents and FW&P regional offices early in April.—*William Phippen, headquarters information officer, Conservation Education Division, Helena*

Turkey Hunters Should Heed Safety Tips

With more than 15,000 hunters expected to pursue wild turkeys in Montana this year, it is clear that turkeys are fast becoming *big* game in the Treasure State. Wild turkeys are popular game in other states, but, unfortunately, in many states the turkey hunting season also leads the way in the total number of reported hunting accidents.

Montana has been lucky. We haven't had a single accident report related to turkey hunting. With Montana's 1994 spring gobbler season open from April 9 to May 8, we hope to keep that record intact. However, as more hunters (there has been an approximate increase of 5,000 hunters since 1991) become interested in pursuing Montana's wily Merriam's turkey, the trends in other states seem to indicate that chances of hunting mishaps will also increase.

Statistics show, much to our surprise, that veteran hunters are more likely to be involved in turkey hunting accidents than novices, and turkey hunters are more likely to be accidentally shot by a buddy than by an unknown hunter.

Before you venture out to hunt a turkey this season, consider these safety tips:

1. Stalking a turkey reduces hunting success and increases the potential for a hunting accident. The time to move into your turkey hunting area is at least one hour before sunrise or at mid-day. Hunters dressed in camo gear moving through the woods during shooting hours are the No. 1 victims of accidental shootings. When moving to, from, or within your turkey hunting area, you should wear hunter's orange.

2. Minimal movement, not total concealment, is the key to hunting success. Any movement can scare away a turkey or cause you to be mistaken for a turkey by another hunter.

3. Although you may think you are the only person hunting in an area, remember that it's sometimes hard to differentiate between a real turkey gobble and a hunter using a call. Be sure of your target and never shoot at movements or sounds.

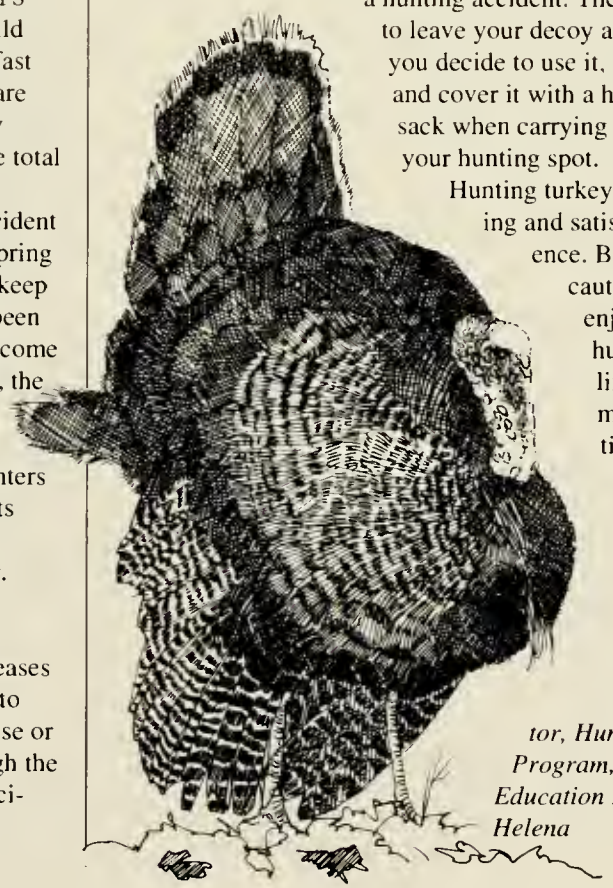
4. Hunt defensively. Find a stand in your hunting area where you can sit or stand against a tree, rock, or stump. Make sure that whatever you are leaning against is at least as broad as your shoulders. This will protect your back as well as hide you from turkeys approaching from behind.

5. Moving, waving, or making turkey sounds to alert another hunter is asking for trouble. If you must get the attention of another hunter, remain still and cough or yell.

6. Hunters wearing red, white, and blue clothing may be mistaken for a turkey. These colors should be eliminated from a turkey hunter's wardrobe.

7. Always handle your firearm safely. It only takes a few seconds to load or unload a firearm. Having the safety on does not replace the need for safe firearm handling. When crossing obstacles, meeting other hunters or nonhunters, or putting your firearm in a vehicle, always unload the firearm and leave the action open. In Montana, loaded firearms in vehicles have caused more deaths than in-the-field hunting-related accidents.

8. A recent study has shown that the use of turkey decoys does not increase hunter success, but does increase the risk of a hunting accident. The best advice is to leave your decoy at home, but if you decide to use it, use a hen decoy and cover it with a hunter-orange sack when carrying it to and from your hunting spot.



Hunting turkeys is a challenging and satisfying experience. By being cautious you will enjoy turkey hunting for a lifetime. For more information on hunter safety in Montana, call or visit your nearest FW&P office.—*Tim Pool, state coordinator, Hunter Education Program, Conservation Education Division, Helena*

Three Montanans Receive TU Awards

Hydrologist Gary Decker and fisheries biologist Rick Swanson, both Bitterroot National Forest employees, and fisheries biologist Chris Clancy of the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks have received the Trout Unlimited (TU) Professional Trout Conservation Award for their work on Bitterroot watershed conditions and bull trout populations. One of TU's highest honors, the award recognizes distinguished contributions in the conservation of trout and salmon and the enhancement of coldwater habitat.

The Bitter Root Chapter of TU nominated Decker, Swanson, and Clancy based on their collaborative work that related watershed conditions to bull trout populations on the Bitterroot National Forest. In their studies, Decker developed a "coarse filter" to assess the conditions of a watershed, while Clancy and Swanson evaluated the status of bull trout populations. When they compared their data, they found that the areas Decker had identified as degraded were depleted of native bull trout. The degraded drainages also tended to contain brook trout, Clancy said.

The nondegraded streams, conversely, tended to have few brook trout, as well as higher numbers of bull trout. A combination of sedimentation and the presence of brook trout appears to have led to the decline of bull trout populations, Clancy said of the ongoing study. Decker's coarse filter method has been validated by Forest Service staff and is now used by other Region 1 forests to assess watershed conditions.

LARRY JAVORSKY

Montana TU officer Marshall Bloom (left) stands with Gary Decker (center) and Chris Clancy, who received TU's Professional Trout Conservation Award.

The Big Hole Loses a Friend

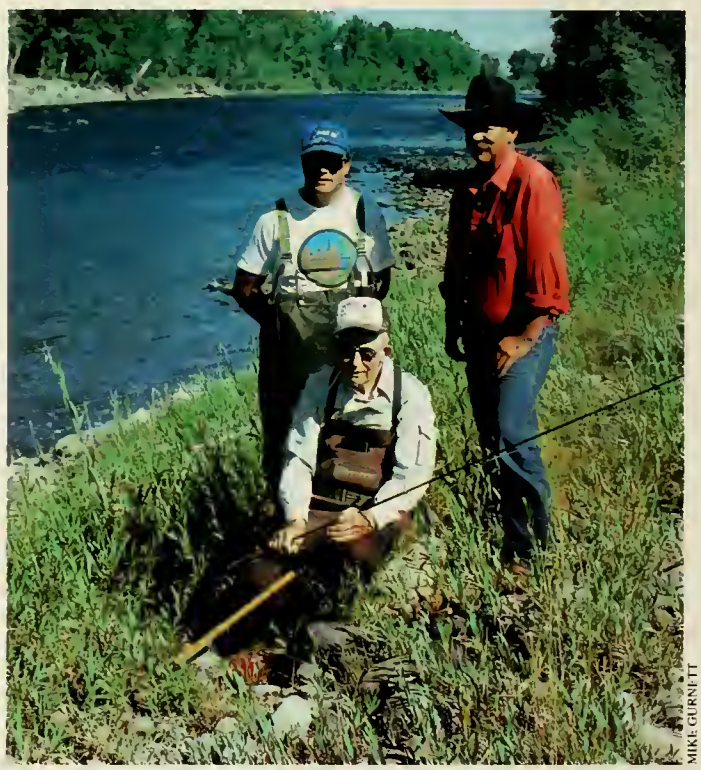
The last time I saw Phil Smith ended up being the last time for a lot of folks. The occasion: the June 1993 salmonfly hatch on the Big Hole River. Phil passed away in November of 1993.

For years, during the hatch, a parade of anglers marched through the door of Phil's fly shop in Melrose to get the latest scoop on which combination of hide, hair, and feathers was working, and where. Phil, the son of an area outfitter, had built a national reputation as an honest and hard-working guide, fisherman, and teacher. He would suggest a color of nymph or pattern of dry fly in a way that made you think you were the only one to get the real inside track.

Where to fish, though, was a different matter. Phil used his position to do a little crowd control by telling one group, "The flies should be at Maiden Rock," and another, "Yesterday, it was pretty good near Brown's Bridge." In the thick of the activity, he seemed most concerned that everyone have a quality experience with the least amount of pressure on the river that was such a part of him.

An early board member of the Big Hole River Foundation, Phil worked year-round with local biologists, anglers, and landowners to enhance the Big Hole and the opportunities the river provides.

Some people are remembered for one particular event. Others, like Phil, are remembered for their long-term, day-in, day-out commitment to a place like the Big Hole River. For many anglers, a visit with Phil was a big part of a trip to the Big Hole. The friendship Phil extended to all who passed through his door will be sorely missed, and a great many anglers will take his memory with them on their floats down the river. Phil would like that.



MIKE GURNETT

Phil Smith (right) with friends George Grant (sitting) and Todd Collins along the Big Hole River.

Memorials may be sent to: The Big Hole River Foundation, P.O. Box 3894; Butte, MT 59702.—*Mike Gurnett, film production supervisor, Conservation Education Division, Helena*

Montana State Parks Calendar

MARCH

1—1994 License Year Begins

Don't forget to renew your fishing license and state park passport.

APRIL

Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park Open on Weekends

The park is open for public tours from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Smith River Fees Reduced

Floater fees are half price in April ($7.50 per floater).

15—Winners Announced for State Park Poster Contest

MAY

Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park Open All Week

The park is open for public tours 7 days a week until September 30.

Motorboat Testing at Lake Elmo State Park

Opportunity for motorboat owners to test engines for the upcoming summer. Testing will be done the first four weekends in May.

1—Regular Smith River Fees in Effect

Floater fees are now full price ($15.00 per floater).

7—Buzzard Day at Makoshika State Park

Grand opening of the Visitor Center and fun activities for the whole family.

21—Bannack State Park Visitor Center Opens

JUNE

Lecture Series Begins at Bannack State Park

Saturday night lecture series features a variety of historical, recreational, and natural resource topics. Lectures begin at 7:00 p.m. Call 834-3413 for a list of topics.

4—Family Fun Day at Lake Elmo State Park

Free entry for all. Lots of fun for the whole family.

23—"Peace Day" at Chief Plenty Coups State Park

A day for all people to come together for reconciliation and healing of spirit.

23-26—Lewis and Clark Encampment at Giant Springs State Park

A variety of historical activities for all ages. Live interpretation of the portage around Great Falls.

26—Roe River Day at Giant Springs State Park

A special day of fun activities designed for children.

JULY

Lecture Series Begins at Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park

Saturday night lecture series entitled "Exploring the Natural." Lectures begin at 8:00 p.m. in the campground amphitheater. Call 287-3541 for a list of topics.

"Night Skies" at Frenchtown Pond State Park

Tour the universe with the Western Montana Astronomical Association (call 542-5500 for exact dates and details).

4—Fort Owen Day at Fort Owen State Park

Ceremony and celebration to commemorate Montana's first permanent white settlement in 1841.

16—Spring Meadow Lake State Park Triathlon

Biking, running, and swimming (call 444-4720 for details).

16-17—Bannack Days at Bannack State Park

History comes alive in this celebration of the Montana frontier amid shoot-outs, weavers, candle makers, blacksmiths, and old-time musicians. Hearty meals served at the Meade Hotel and a church service offered on Sunday morning.

23—Kids' Day at Spring Meadow Lake State Park

A special day of fun activities for children.

24—Seniors' Day at Spring Meadow Lake State Park

A special day of fun activities for senior citizens.

30—Beach Games at Lake Elmo State Park

A variety of fun and crazy sports events held on the beach of Lake Elmo. Activities include the keg toss, canoe race, football toss, ring toss, and paddleboat races.

AUGUST

"Night Skies" Tour Continues at Frenchtown Pond State Park

Call 542-5500 for exact dates and details.

6—Garden City Triathlon at Frenchtown Pond State Park

Swim, bicycle, and run beginning and ending at the park. For further information call 542-5500.

19-20—Dinner Theater in the Park at Makoshika State Park

"Pitchfork" fondue dinner and a play in the park. A real treat!

SEPTEMBER

26-30—Native American Awareness Week at Chief Plenty Coups State Park

Activities for all ages focusing on Native American culture, history, and dress.

OCTOBER

Off-season Camping Fees Now in Effect

Camping fees at state parks are reduced to $4.00 per night with a state park passport.

Smith River Fees Reduced

Floater fees are half-price ($7.50 per floater).

Lewis and Clark Caverns State Park Open Only on Weekends

The park is open for public tours only on weekends, from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (except for school groups with reservations during weekdays).

29—Halloween Haunted House at Bannack State Park

Historic ghosts walk the halls of the Meade Hotel; ghost stories and hot chocolate for visitors. Why do you think they call it a ghost town?

TROUT FLIES: PROVEN PATTERNS, by Gary LaFontaine, Greycliff Publishing Co., P.O. Box 1273, Helena, MT 59624; 1993, 260 pages, hard cover, $39.95.

Trout Flies describes 62 fly patterns developed by noted Montana angler and author Gary LaFontaine (other works include *The Challenge of the Trout, Caddisflies,* and *The Dry Flies, New Angles*). It includes black-and-white and color photographs of each pattern and detailed, illustrated instructions for tying each one. Beyond its obvious appeal to avid fly tiers, the book contains a wealth of information on when and how to fish the flies and on fly fishing in general. LaFontaine's unique approach of including excerpts from his fishing log addressing how he has used and experimented with these innovative patterns over the years lends an intimacy to the work that readers are sure to enjoy.

INDIAN CREEK CHRONICLES, by Pete Fromm, Lyons and Burford Publishers, 31 West 21 Street, New York, NY 10010; 1993, 192 pages, hard cover, $21.95.

Pete Fromm was a restless 20-year-old student at the University of Montana when he decided to spend seven months in the Selway-Bitterroot Wilderness working on a salmon hatching job for the Idaho Department of Fish and Game. Why? As he would say later, "I'd been reading way too many mountain man books....It seemed like an opportunity to find out about all this romance business....I didn't have a clue what I was getting into." Facing a long winter and armed with little more than three pairs of wool pants, 100 pounds of potatoes, some canned goods, and a rifle, he left the university and set off to live in a canvas tent from October to June, 1978. The closest human being or viable road was 40 miles away. The story of Fromm's transformation from a starry-eyed greenhorn to a self-reliant woodsman is compelling and humorous. Fromm, who lives in Great Falls, is also author of *The Tall Uncut*, a collection of outdoor stories.

MEN OF THE OPEN RANGE & OTHER POEMS, by Mike Logan, Buglin' Bull Press, 32 S. Howie, Helena, MT 59601; 1993, 80 pages, soft cover, $7.95 plus $1.50 postage and handling.

Men of the Open Range, Mike Logan's sixth book of verse, is a celebration of the way of life on the ranches of Montana. The skillfully crafted poems—sometimes humorous and sometimes thoughtful—accurately reflect the West's open spirit and traditions. As Mike Korn says in the foreword, "Mike's uncanny ability to use and play with meter and rhyme, combined with a healthy dosage of old-time language—words and slang—creates brush strokes to paint the story." Logan, who lives in Helena, has been a host and featured speaker at the Cowboy Poetry Gathering in Elko, Nevada, and a featured poet on the 1991 CBS John Denver Christmas Special, "Montana Christmas Skies."

RECORDS OF NORTH AMERICAN BIG GAME, 10TH EDITION, compiled by the Boone and Crockett Club, Old Milwaukee Depot, 250 Station Drive, Missoula, MT 59801-2753; 1993, 624 pages, hard cover, $49.95 plus $3 for shipping in the U.S. and $4 for shipping to Canada and foreign destinations.

Released in December of 1993, the latest Boone and Crockett record book lists trophies taken from the 1800s to the present in 35 big game categories. Each trophy listing in each category contains the final score, world ranking, name of owner and hunter, key skull or rack measurements, and place and year of kill. Chapters include the stories of hunters who took new world record specimens of Roosevelt's elk, nontypical Coues' whitetail, Central Canada barren ground caribou, nontypical American elk, grizzly bear, Sitka blacktail deer, barren ground caribou, and muskox, as well as detailed information on caring for trophies in the field and at home. Other chapters discuss the calibers of rifles used to take trophy big game and the number of trophies that were taken by bow and arrow. Illustrations include seven full-color paintings by renowned wildlife artist Guy Coheleach, a sketch of two bull moose by Hayden Lambson, and black-and-white photographs of 55 top-ranked trophies in all big game categories.

MAJESTY: VISIONS FROM THE HEART OF ELK COUNTRY, published by Falcon Press, P.O. Box 1718, Helena, MT 59624, in cooperation with the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation; 1993, 124 pages, hard cover, $29.50.

This full-color, coffee-table book contains 100 spectacular photos of elk and elk country taken by many of North America's foremost wildlife photographers, including Montanans Conrad Rowe, Mike Sample, Michael H. Francis, Donald M. Jones, Denver Bryan, Alan and Sandy Carey, and Pete and Alice Bengeyfield. Quotations from noted naturalists and sportsmen—e.g., Teddy Roosevelt, John Madson, Paul Schullery, and John Muir—fit nicely with the photos. The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, headquartered in Missoula, directs its efforts toward protecting and conserving important elk habitat and plans to use royalties from the book for habitat enhancement or acquisition. As the foundation's Lance Schelvan says in the introduction: "We believe that nothing could be more important than taking care of what's left of the land around us....We feel that elk best symbolize the wonderful diversity of the western landscape, even if we only hear them on dark September nights. So we publish this book as a celebration of elk, and where they live."

ANATOMY OF A FISHING MOVIE

by Mike Gurnett
Film Production Supervisor
Conservation Education Division

The assignment seemed simple enough: Make a documentary that explores the lives of three men and their influence on three rivers (George Grant, the Big Hole; Bud Lilly, the Madison; and Dan Bailey, the Yellowstone). And while you're at it, make the film a celebration of Montana's wild trout story. With a hasty review of my memory bank, I figured if I could make a film about anything, this should be it. After all, I've been launching some kind of hook attached to some sort of line into trout waters someplace in Montana all my life.

So the filming began. I soon discovered that real-time, two-dimensional documentation of fly fishing holds one's interest right in there with watching a raft inflate. I came to the realization that my recollection of a day on the river is actually a lifetime blended into a few commemorative journeys in which all the fish are over 18 inches, most take dries, deer imbibe at each riffle, eagles soar, osprey plummet, and family and friends wear eternal grins.

The camera sees reality. After three weeks and 3,000 feet of film, I had wide shots demonstrating double-haul casting with 8-weight rods, medium shots of roll-casting with 3-weights, close-ups of precision-made reels, macro-images of delicate dry flies, and footage of two rather small fish being landed. After editing, I figured this would get me about 30 seconds into the 30-minute program. Not only did I question how to parlay these visuals into a celebration, I wondered if I would ever work again.

Fortunately, the time came to begin interviewing George, Bud, and outdoor writer Charles Waterman on behalf of the late Dan Bailey. During hours of recording, each spoke not of size and numbers of trout, but of where trout live. They recalled battles, successes, and disappointments. With individual eloquence, they described what the rivers had done for them. The true celebration began to be unveiled.

The department's new documentary explores the lives of three men and their influence on three Montana Rivers.

The personality of the entire project changed. The debates of 3-weight versus 8-weight, nymph versus dry, and who really invented a particular pattern ended up on the editing room floor. Though technique and equipment are interesting and important, "Three Men—Three Rivers" is really the story of why any of all that matters. The film celebrates the values and commitments shared by people who step forward in the interest of wild trout in quality waters, and in doing so, provide the rest of us the opportunity to step into a trout stream and immerse ourselves in a wonderful experience. Too often, we take that experience for granted.

Trout fishing in Montana holds a particular magic—a magic that hasn't always been here. The total experience of trout fishing in Montana is the result of active participation, not detached observation, by people who really care. If catching fish is your sole reason for going to a river, then these mens' lives are not the story, this is not the film, and Montana is not the place. But if you are drawn to rivers for simple reasons that seem complex to explain, I hope you enjoy "Three Men—Three Rivers."

"Three Men—Three Rivers" received two gold medals at the recently completed New York International Film and Video Festival—one in the "Nature and Wildlife" category and one in the "Best Camerawork" category. The film is available free of charge for screening at meetings, classes, or conventions. Copies of the 30-minute film also are available for sale on 16-mm film and VHS tape. For more information, contact the FW&P Film Center, 930 West Custer Ave.; Helena, MT 59620-0701 (406) 444-2426.

Readers Respond

Buffalo Hunt Described

I just read the interesting article in the July/August 1993 issue of *Montana Outdoors* about the Ulm buffalo jump.

There was speculation as to just how the Indians drove the buffalo over the cliff.

If you, or anyone, wants to know just how it was done, look up the books by James Willard Schultz.

I read them in the 1920s, I can't remember the names of the books.

Schultz, as a young orphan boy, was sent to Montana Territory to live with an uncle, who ran a Hudson Bay trading post in Blackfeet country. The uncle was married to a Blackfeet woman, the boy grew up among the Blackfeet and married a young woman of that tribe.

One of his books describes exactly how a trained caller started the buffalo, which of course were fairly close to the cliffs, to follow him by mimicking a buffalo calf with a robe over him and jumping around as though in trouble until a buffalo cow or two trots out to see about this "calf" and then more of the herd follows until they are between two long rows of rocks, laid out as wings, with young, agile Indians hiding under buffalo robes behind every rock pile. When the herd is well within the rock wings the caller keeps up his act until he is close to the cliff, then the caller ducks down into a cleft in the rocks. Then the people rise up from the rock piles and wave their rocks and yell at the herd until at least part of the herd is pushed over by the ones behind.

This is the way I remember it after these many years.—*Paul E. Stephenson, Anaconda*

Education is the Key

July/August 1993 was a good issue. I found all the articles interesting and educational. I really appreciate the exposure you give to the nongame species, which on the whole are less well known but just as fascinating as animals we hunt and fish.

I particularly like the articles with a strong ecological bent, such as Dave Genter's piece on harlequin ducks and Erick Greene's story on lazuli buntings. The article on the Elkhorns was also good. They all were worth reading. I read the magazine cover to cover every issue. Keep up the great work—education is the key to wildlife preservation.—*George Wuerthner, Livingston*

Waldie Article Superb

Lucky me, I subscribed to *Montana Outdoors* in time to catch Scott Waldie's GREAT article in the September/October 1993 issue entitled "Bel-Air on the Big Hole." I sent copies of it to many members of our local fly fishing club who fly fish in and enjoy Montana. Superbly written article!

Further, I enjoy your magazine very much—the articles and the great photography.

Keep up the good work and if you haven't already—please solicit Waldie for another article.—*Bill Barnett, Wenatchee, Washington*

P.S. I hope you already have.

Origin of Kootenai Falls Sheep Herd in Question

As a native of Montana, I find your magazine most interesting. When I saw the picture of the bighorn sheep and the article on Kootenai Falls and the Kootenai Falls Wildlife Management Area in the September/October 1993 issue, I was most interested. I was born at my aunt's house in Troy, Montana, and lived about 10 miles below Kootenai Falls.

My interest quickly turned to agitation as I saw the statement that the herd originated from a 1954-1955 transplant. There was a transplant in the 1950s, but this was the second transplant. My father, Lee Martin Jenson, worked for the U.S. Forest Service a number of years in the 30's and 40's, maybe before that.

I haven't gotten the time down exactly, but have people working on it. Somewhere between 1937 and 1941 my father trapped and helped to transplant sheep into this area—the first year after they were transplanted he wintered

Lee Martin Jenson, ca 1940

with them. A big ram winter-killed and when dad came out in the spring he backpacked the sheep's head and skin out (see photo). The stuffed head hangs today at the depot in Libby, Montana.

When dad worked for the Forest Service he was a shoer, packer, and also the closest thing to a veterinarian that they had. I do know he spent weeks trapping the sheep by Ural Mountain (which is gone now because of the Libby Dam.) Whether he had help I don't know. They brought the sheep out in individual pens, and one big ram fought the pen so hard he killed himself.

My dad's boss's name was Leslie Leigh.

I can give you the names of a few people who can verify that sheep were at Kootenai Falls before the 50's. I'll also let you know when and if we find anything in the Forest Service records.—*Janeth L. Hilmes, Othello, Washington*

• *Thanks for sharing the information about your father's role in bighorn sheep transplants in the Libby area. We've tried, unsuccessfully, to document sheep transplants at Kootenai Falls prior to1954-1955—which doesn't mean they didn't occur, only that we can't find records of such transplants. Additional information would be welcome. Readers?*—Editor

Contributors

Fraley

"It's law enforcement at a different pace, taking place across millions of acres of Montana's roadless areas," says **John Fraley** in his article beginning on page 2. More than 20 FW&P wardens and several U.S. Forest Service rangers have backcountry enforcement duties around the state—duties that are strenuous and occasionally dangerous, but also highly rewarding. Despite the hardships, the wardens and rangers who patrol "Beyond Road's End" are unanimous in their love for the work. Fraley, an FW&P information officer who has made more than 150 trips into Montana wilderness areas over the past 20 years for work and pleasure, is stationed in the Kalispell (Region 1) headquarters.

Auchly

A "snipe hunt" to most people may mean a prank played on the unwary, but not to knowledgeable birders and wildlife enthusiasts. As **Bruce Auchly** tells us in this issue's "Watchable Wildlife" installment, "No nighttime excursions to swamps armed with clubs and burlap bags are necessary to see and hear the snipe in Montana." These long-billed, migratory shorebirds are present in every corner of the state, and their spring mating flights would be the envy of any precision flying team. To find out more about snipe and where to look for them, turn to Auchly's article on page 9. Auchly is the department's information officer in Great Falls (Region 4).

Phippen

William Phippen, an information officer at FW&P headquarters in Helena, tackled two articles for this issue of *MO*: a wrap-up of the 1994 state waterfowl stamp competition and a "Lands Legacy" segment on the Milk River Wildlife Management Areas. This year's winning duck stamp entry—a pair of wigeons winging over the Montana prairie, painted by Roger Cruwys of Bozeman—is reproduced on page 14. The Milk River WMAs, located east of Malta along the Hi-Line, are home to many species of waterfowl and upland birds, as well as white-tailed deer, beaver, muskrat, songbirds, and other nongame species (see page 17). Leased by FW&P from the federal Bureau of Reclamation since 1953, these small but valuable areas reflect the diversity of function built into the WMA system.

According to Helena author and eminent turkey historian **Dan Vichorek**, a lot of things have changed in the turkey woods in recent years. "Some of us," he says, "are old enough to remember when unschooled turkey hunters blundered pathetically around the piney woods and gumbo knobs in Levis and flannel shirts with gimme hats, carrying a rusty old pumpgun. No more!" To find out how turkey hunting fashions have changed, and to hear the sad but instructive story of one Fremont Snood, turn to Vichorek's fanciful tale on page 27. When he isn't modeling hunting apparel for outdoor equipment companies or actually stalking the wily Merriam's turkey, Vichorek is a technical editor for the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation's Facility Siting Bureau in Helena.

Vichorek

The clever cartoons illustrating this story are from the pen of **Dave McGee**, a Great Falls-based artist whose work frequently appears in *MO*.

MO thanks the following photographers and artists for their contributions to this issue: **Robert E. Barber**, Arvada, CO; **Dave Bennett, Barbara Thomas, and Jan L. Wassink**, Kalispell; **Harry Engels and Mike Logan**, Helena; **Michael and Patsy Fribley**, Big Timber; **Donald M. Jones**, Troy; **Dave McGee, Neal and Mary Jane Mishler, and Rodney Schlecht**, Great Falls; **Bill McRae**, Fairfield; **Jim Oltersdorf**, Hamilton; **Conrad Rowe**, Seeley Lake; and **Tom J. Ulrich**, West Glacier. Thanks also to the following contributors who work for the department: **Mike Aderhold**, Great Falls; **John Fraley**, Kalispell; and **Mike Gurnett**, Helena.